

**An account of the manners
and customs of
the Aborigines
and the state of their relations with
Europeans**

**by
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Chapter I.

PRELIMINARY REMARKS—UNJUST OPINIONS GENERALLY ENTERTAINED OF THE CHARACTER OF THE NATIVE—DIFFICULTIES AND DISADVANTAGES HE LABOURS UNDER IN HIS RELATIONS WITH EUROPEANS—AGGRESSIONS AND INJURIES ON THE PART OF THE LATTER IN GREAT DEGREE EXTENUATE HIS CRIMES.

Upon bringing to a close the narrative of an Expedition of Discovery in Australia, during the progress of which an extensive portion of the previously unknown parts of that continent were explored, I have thought it might not be uninteresting to introduce a few pages on the subject of the Aborigines of the country.

It would afford me much gratification to see an interest excited on their behalf proportioned to the claims of a people who have hitherto been misjudged or misrepresented.

For the last twelve years I have been personally resident in one or other of the Australian Colonies, and have always been in frequent intercourse with the aboriginal tribes that were near, rarely being without some of them constantly with me as domestics.

To the advantages of private opportunities of acquiring a knowledge of their character were added, latterly, the facilities afforded by my holding a public appointment in South Australia, in the midst of a district more densely populated by natives than any in that Colony, where no settler had ventured to locate, and where, prior to my arrival in October 1841, frightful scenes of bloodshed, rapine, and hostility between the natives and parties coming overland with stock, had been of frequent and very recent occurrence.

As Resident Magistrate of the Murray District, I may almost say, that for the last three years I have lived with the natives. My duties have frequently taken me to very great distances up the Murray or the Darling rivers, when I was generally accompanied only by a single European, or at most two, and where, if attacked, there was no possibility of my receiving any human aid. I have gone almost alone among hordes of those fierce and blood-thirsty savages, as they were then considered, and have stood singly amongst them in the remote and trackless wilds, when hundreds were congregated around, without ever receiving the least injury or insult.

In my first visits to the more distant tribes I found them shy, alarmed, and suspicious, but soon learning that I had no wish to injure them, they met me with readiness and confidence. My wishes became their law; they conceded points to me that they would not have done to their own people, and on many occasions cheerfully underwent hunger, thirst, and fatigue to serve me.

Former habits and prejudices in some respects gave way to the influence I acquired. Tribes that never met or heard of one another before were brought to mingle in friendly intercourse. Single individuals traversed over immense distances and through many intervening tribes, which formerly they never could have attempted to pass, and in accomplishing this the white man's name alone was the talisman that proved their safe-guard and protection.

During the whole of the three years I was Resident at Moorunde, not a single case of serious injury or aggression ever took place on the part of the natives against the Europeans; and a district, once considered the wildest and most dangerous, was, when I left it in November 1844, looked upon as one of the most peaceable and orderly in the province.

Independently of my own personal experience, on the subject of the Aborigines, I have much pleasure in acknowledging the obligations I am under to M. Moorhouse, Esq. Protector of Aborigines in Adelaide, for his valuable assistance, in comparing and discussing the results of

our respective observations, on matters connected with the natives, and for the obliging manner in which he has furnished me with many of his own important and well-arranged notes on various points of interest in their history.

By this aid, I am enabled, in the following pages, to combine my own observations and experience with those of Mr. Moorhouse, especially on points connected with the Adelaide Tribes. In some cases, extracts from Mr. Moorhouse's notes, will be copied in his own words, but in most I found an alteration or rearrangement to be indispensable to enable me to connect and amplify the subjects: I wish it to be particularly understood, however, that with any deductions, inferences, remarks, or suggestions, that may incidentally be introduced, Mr. Moorhouse is totally unconnected, that gentleman's notes refer exclusively to abstract matters of fact, relating to the habits, customs, or peculiarities of the people treated of, and are generally confined to the Adelaide Tribes.

[Note 38: Some few of these notes were printed in the Colony, in a detached form, as Reports to the Colonial Government, or in the Vocabularies of the Missionaries, and since my return to England I find others have been published in papers, ordered to be printed by the House of Commons, in August 1844. From the necessity, however, of altering in some measure the phraseology, to combine Mr. Moorhouse's remarks with my own, and to preserve a uniformity in the descriptions, it has not been practicable or desirable in all cases, to separate or distinguish by inverted commas, those observations which I have adopted. I have, therefore, preferred making a general acknowledgment of the use I have made of the notes that were supplied to me by Mr. Moorhouse.]

In the descriptions given in the following pages, although there may occasionally be introduced, accounts of the habits, manners, or customs of some of the tribes inhabiting different parts of Australia I have visited, yet there are others which are exclusively peculiar to the natives of South Australia. I wish it, therefore, to be understood, that unless mention is made of other tribes, or other parts of the continent, the details given are intended to apply to that province generally, and particularly to the tribes in it, belonging to the districts of Adelaide and the Murray river.

As far as has yet been ascertained, the whole of the aboriginal inhabitants of this continent, scattered as they are over an immense extent of country, bear so striking a resemblance in physical appearance and structure to each other; and their general habits, customs, and pursuits, are also so very similar, though modified in some respects by local circumstances or climate, that little doubt can be entertained that all have originally sprung from the same stock. The principal points of difference, observable between various tribes, appear to consist chiefly in some of their ceremonial observances, and in the variations of dialect in the language they speak; the latter are, indeed, frequently so great, that even to a person thoroughly acquainted with any one dialect, there is not the slightest clue by which he can understand what is said by a tribe speaking a different one.

The only account I have yet met with, which professed to give any particular description of the Aborigines of New Holland, is that contained in the able papers upon this subject, by Captain Grey, in the second volume of his travels. When it is considered, that the material for that purpose was collected by the author, during a few months interval between his two expeditions, which he spent at Swan River, and a short time subsequently passed at King George's Sound, whilst holding the appointment of Government Resident there; it is perfectly surprising that the amount of information amassed should be so great, and so generally correct, on subjects where so many mistakes are liable to be made, in all first inquiries, when we are ignorant of the character and habits of the people of whom information is to be sought, and unacquainted with the language they speak.

The subject, however, upon a portion of which Captain Grey so successfully entered, is very extensive, and one which no single individual, except by the devotion of a life-time, could

hope fully to discuss. The Continent of Australia is so vast, and the dialects, customs, and ceremonies of its inhabitants so varied in detail, though so similar in general outline and character, that it will require the lapse of years, and the labours of many individuals, to detect and exhibit the links which form the chain of connection in the habits and history of tribes so remotely separated; and it will be long before any one can attempt to give to the world a complete and well-drawn outline of the whole.

It is not therefore to satisfy curiosity, or to interrupt the course of inquiry, that I enter upon the present work; I neither profess, nor could I attempt to give a full or matured account of the Aborigines of New Holland. Captain Grey's descriptions on this subject are limited to the races of South-western, as mine are principally directed to those of Southern Australia, with occasionally some remarks or anecdotes relating to tribes in other parts of the Continent with whom I have come in contact.

The character of the Australian native has been so constantly misrepresented and traduced, that by the world at large he is looked upon as the lowest and most degraded of the human species, and is generally considered as ranking but little above the members of the brute creation. Savages have always many vices, but I do not think that these are worse in the New Hollanders, than in many other aboriginal races. It is said, indeed, that the Australian is an irreclaimable, unteachable being; that he is cruel, blood-thirsty, revengeful, and treacherous; and in support of such assertions, references are made to the total failure of all missionary and scholastic efforts hitherto made on his behalf, and to many deeds of violence or aggression committed by him upon the settler.

[Note 39: I cannot adduce a stronger proof in support of the position I assume, in favour of the natives, than by quoting the clear and just conclusions at which the Right Honourable Lord Stanley, the present Secretary of State for the Colonies, arrived, when considering the case of some collisions with the natives on the Ovens River, and after a full consideration of the various circumstances connected with the occurrence. In a despatch to Governor Sir G. Gipps, dated 5th October, 1841, Lord Stanley says, "Contrasting the accounts of the Aborigines given by Mr. Docker with those given by Mr. Mackay, and the different terms on which those gentlemen appear to be with them in the same vicinity, I cannot divest myself of the apprehension that the fault in this case lies with the colonists rather than with the natives. It was natural, that conduct so harsh and intemperate as that of the Messrs. Mackay should be signally visited on them, and probably also on wholly unoffending persons, by a race of uninstructed and ignorant savages. At the same time the case of Mr. Docker affords a most satisfactory instance of natives entering into permanent service with white men, and working, as they appear to do, steadily for wages."]

With respect to the first point, I consider that an intimate knowledge of the peculiar habits, laws, and traditions, by which this people are governed, is absolutely necessary, before any just opinion can be formed as to how far the means hitherto pursued, have been suitable, or adapted to counteract the influence of custom and the force of prejudice. Until this knowledge is attained, we have no right to brand them as either irreclaimable, or unteachable. My own impression, after long experience, and an attentive consideration of the subject, is, that in the present anomalous state of our relations with the Aborigines, our measures are neither comprehensive enough for, nor is our system sufficiently adapted to, the singular circumstances they are in, to enable us successfully to contend with the difficulties and impediments in the way of their rising in the scale of civilization.

Upon the second point it is also necessary to make many inquiries before we arrive at our conclusions; and I have no doubt, if this be done with calmness, and without prejudice, it will be generally found that there are many extenuating circumstances which may be brought to modify our judgment. I am anxious, if possible, to place a few of these before the public, in the hope, that by lessening in some degree the unfavourable opinion heretofore entertained of

the Aborigines, they may be considered for the future as more deserving our sympathy and benevolence.

Without assuming for the native a freedom from vice, or in any way attempting to palliate the many brutalising habits that pollute his character, I would still contend that, if stained with the excesses of unrestrained passions, he is still sometimes sensible to the better emotions of humanity. Many of the worst traits in his character are the result of necessity, or the force of custom—the better ones are implanted in him as a part of his nature. With capabilities for receiving, and an aptness for acquiring instruction, I believe he has also the capacity for appreciating the rational enjoyments of life.

Even in his present low and debased condition, and viewed under every disadvantages, I do not imagine that his vices would usually be found greater, or his passions more malignant than those of a very large proportion of men ordinarily denominated civilised. On the contrary, I believe were Europeans placed under the same circumstances, equally wronged, and equally shut out from redress, they would not exhibit half the moderation or forbearance that these poor untutored children of impulse have invariably shewn.

It is true that occasionally many crimes have been committed by them, and robberies and murders have too often occurred; but who can tell what were the provocations which led to, what the feelings which impelled such deeds? Neither have they been the only or the first aggressors, nor has their race escaped unscathed in the contest. Could blood answer blood, perhaps for every drop of European's shed by natives, a torrent of their, by European hands, would crimson the earth.

[Note 40: "The whites were generally the aggressors. He had been informed that a petition had been presented to the Governor, containing a list of nineteen murders committed by the blacks. He could, if it were necessary, make out a list of five hundred blacks who had been slaughtered by the whites, and that within a short time."—Extract from speech of Mr. Threlkeld to the Auxiliary Aborigines' Protection Society in New South Wales. Abstract of a

"Return of the number of homicides committed respectively by blacks and whites, within the limits of the northwestern district (of Port Phillip), since its first occupation by settlers—"

"Total number of white people killed by Aborigines 8

"Total number of Aborigines killed by white people 43."

This is only in one district, and only embraces such cases as came to the knowledge of Mr. Protector Parker. For particulars vide Papers on Aborigines of Australian Colonies, printed for the House of Commons, August 1844, p. 318.]

Let us now inquire a little, upon whose side right and justice are arrayed in palliation (if any such there can be) of deeds of violence or aggression on the part of either.

It is an undeniable fact, that wherever European colonies have been established in Australia, the native races in that neighbourhood are rapidly decreasing, and already in some of the elder settlements, have totally disappeared. It is equally indisputable that the presence of the white man has been the sole agent in producing so lamentable an effect; that the evil is still going on, increased in a ratio proportioned to the number of new settlements formed, or the rapidity with which the settlers overrun new districts. The natural, the inevitable, but the no less melancholy result must be, that in the course of a few years more, if nothing be done to check it, the whole of the aboriginal tribes of Australia will be swept away from the face of the earth. A people who, by their numbers, have spread around the whole of this immense

continent, and have probably penetrated into and occupied its inmost recesses, will become quite extinct, their name forgotten, their very existence but a record of history.

It is a popular, but an unfair and unwarranted assumption, that these consequences are the result of the natural course of events; that they are ordained by Providence, unavoidable, and not to be impeded. Let us at least ascertain how far they are chargeable upon ourselves.

Without entering upon the abstract question concerning the right of one race of people to wrest from another their possessions, simply because they happen to be more powerful than the original inhabitants, or because they imagine that they can, by their superior skill or acquirements, enable the soil to support a denser population, I think it will be conceded by every candid and right-thinking mind, that no one can justly take that which is not his own, without giving some equivalent in return, or deprive a people of their ordinary means of support, and not provide them with any other instead. Yet such is exactly the position we are in with regard to the inhabitants of Australia.

[Note 41: “The invasion of those ancient rights (of the natives) by survey and land appropriations of any kind, is justifiable only on the ground, that we should at the same time reserve for the natives an AMPLE SUFFICIENCY for THEIR PRESENT and future use and comfort, under the new style of things into which they are thrown; a state in which we hope they will be led to live in greater comfort, on a small space, than they enjoyed before it occurred, on their extensive original possessions.”—Reply of His Excellency Colonel Gawler, to the gentlemen who objected to sections of land being appropriated for the natives, before the public were allowed to select.]

Without laying claim to this country by right of conquest, without pleading even the mockery of cession, or the cheater of sale, we have unhesitatingly entered upon, occupied, and disposed of its lands, spreading forth a new population over its surface, and driving before us the original inhabitants.

To sanction this aggression, we have not, in the abstract, the slightest shadow of either right or justice—we have not even the extenuation of endeavouring to compensate those we have injured, or the merit of attempting to mitigate the sufferings our presence inflicts.

It is often argued, that we merely have taken what the natives did not require, or were making no use of; that we have no wish to interfere with them if they do not interfere with us, but rather that we are disposed to treat them with kindness and conciliation, if they are willing to be friends with us. What, however, are the actual facts of the case; and what is the position of a tribe of natives, when their country is first taken possession of by Europeans.

It is true that they do not cultivate the ground; but have they, therefore, no interest in its productions? Does it not supply grass for the sustenance of the wild animals upon which in a great measure they are dependent for their subsistence?—does it not afford roots and vegetables to appease their hunger?—water to satisfy their thirst, and wood to make their fire?—or are these necessities left to them by the white man when he comes to take possession of their soil? Alas, it is not so! all are in turn taken away from the original possessors. The game of the wilds that the European does not destroy for his amusement are driven away by his flocks and herds. [Note 42 at end of para.] The waters are occupied and enclosed, and access to them is frequently forbidden. The fields are fenced in, and the natives are no longer at liberty to dig up roots—the white man claims the timber, and the very firewood itself is occasion ally denied to them. Do they pass by the habitation of the intruder, they are probably chased away or bitten by his dogs, and for this they can get no redress. [Note 43 at end of para.] Have they dogs of their own, they are unhesitatingly shot or worried because they are an annoyance to the domestic animals of the Europeans. Daily and hourly do their wrongs multiply upon them. The more numerous the white population becomes, and the

more advanced the stage of civilization to which the settlement progresses, the greater are the hardships that fall to their lot and the more completely are they cut off from the privileges of their birthright. All that they have is in succession taken away from them—their amusements, their enjoyments, their possessions, their freedom—and all that they receive in return is obloquy, and contempt, and degradation, and oppression. [Note 44 appears after note 43, below]

[Note 42: “But directly an European settles down in the country, his constant residence in one spot soon sends the animals away from it, and although he may in no other way interfere with the natives, the mere circumstance of his residing there, does the man on whose land he settles the injury of depriving him of his ordinary means of subsistence.”—GREY’S TRAVELS, vol. ii. p. 298.

“The great question was, were we to give them no equivalent for that which we had taken from them? Had we deprived them of nothing? Was it nothing that they were driven from the lands where their fathers lived, where they were born and which were endeared to them by associations equally strong with the associations of more civilised people? He believed that their affections were as warm as the Europeans.” “Perhaps he obtained his subsistence by fishing, and occupied a slip of land on the banks of a river or the margin of a lake. Was he to be turned off as soon as the land was required, without any consideration whatever?” “Had any proper attempt been made for their civilization? They had not yet had fair play—they had been courted by the missionaries with the Bible on the one hand, and had at the sametime been driven away and destroyed by the stock-keepers on the other. He thought that they might be reclaimed if the proper course was adopted.”—EXTRACTS FROM THE SPEECH OF SYDNEY STEPHEN, ESQ., AT A MEETING ON BEHALF OF THE ABORIGINES IN SYDNEY, OCTOBER 19, 1838.

I have myself repeatedly seen the natives driven off private lands in the vicinity of Adelaide, and their huts burned, even in cold wet weather. The records of the Police Office will shew that they have been driven off the Park lands, or those belonging to Government, or at least that they have been brought up and punished for cutting wood from the trees there. What are they to do, when there is not a stick or a tree within miles of Adelaide that they can legally take?]

[Note 43: I have known repeated instances of natives in Adelaide being bitten severely by savage dogs rushing out at them from the yards of their owners, as they were peaceably passing along the street. On the other hand I have known a native imprisoned for throwing his waddy at, and injuring a pig, which was eating a melon he had laid down for a moment in the street, and when the pig ought not to have been in the street at all. In February 1842, a dog belonging to a native was shot by order of Mr. Gouger, the then Colonial Secretary, and the owner as soon as he became aware of the circumstance, speared his wife for not taking better care of it, although she could not possibly have helped the occurrence. If natives then revenge so severely such apparently trivial offences among themselves, can we wonder that they should sometimes retaliate upon us for more aggravated ones.]

[Note 44: The following are extracts from an address to a jury, when trying some aboriginal natives, by Judge Willis. They at least shew some of the BLESSINGS the Aborigines experience from being made British subjects, and placed under British laws:—”I have, on a recent occasion, stated my opinion, which I still entertain, that the proprietor of a run, or, in other words, one who holds a lease or license from the Crown to depasture certain Crown lands, may take all lawful means to prevent either natives or others from entering or remaining upon it.” “The aborigines of Van Diemen’s Land were strictly commanded, by Governor Arthur’s proclamation of the 15th of April 1828 (a proclamation of which His Majesty King George the Fourth, through the Right honourable the then Secretary of State, by a dispatch of the 2nd of February, 1829, under the circumstances, signified his approval,) “to

retire and depart from, and for no reason, and no pretence, save as therein provided, (viz. travelling annually to the sea coast in quest of shellfish, under certain regulations,) to re-enter the settled districts of Van Diemen's Land, or any portions of land cultivated and occupied by any person whomsoever, under the authority of Her Majesty's Government, on pain of forcible expulsion therefrom, and such consequences as might be necessarily attendant on it, and all magistrates and other persons by them authorized and deputed, were required to conform themselves to the directions and instructions of this proclamation, in effecting the retirement and expulsion of the Aborigines from the settled districts of that territory.”]

What are they to do under such circumstances, or how support a life so bereft of its wonted supplies? Can we wonder that they should still remain the same low abject and degraded creatures that they are, loitering about the white man's house, and cringing, and pandering to the lowest menial for that food they can no longer procure for themselves? or that wandering in misery through a country, now no longer their own, their lives should be curtailed by want, exposure, or disease? If, on the other hand, upon the first appearance of Europeans, the natives become alarmed, and retire from their presence, they must give up all the haunts they had been accustomed to frequent, and must either live in a starving condition, in the back country, ill supplied with game, and often wanting water, or they must trespass upon the territory of another tribe, in a district perhaps little calculated to support an additional population, even should they be fortunate enough to escape being forced into one belonging to an enemy.

Under any circumstances, however, they have but little respite from inconvenience and want. The white man rapidly spreads himself over the country, and without the power of retiring any further, they are overtaken, and beset by all the evils from which they had previously fled. Such are some of the blessings held out to the savage by civilization, and they are only some of them. The picture is neither fanciful nor overdrawn; there is no trait in it that I have not personally witnessed, or that might not have been enlarged upon; and there are often other circumstances of greater injury and aggression, which, if dwelt upon, would have cast a still darker shade upon the prospects and condition of the native.

Enough has, however, perhaps been said to indicate the degree of injury our presence unavoidably inflicts. I would hope, also, to point out the justice, as well as the expediency of appropriating a considerable portion of the money obtained, by the sales of land, towards alleviating the miseries our occupation of their country has occasioned to the original owners. [Note 44a: “That it appears to memorialists that the original occupants of the soil have an irresistible claim on the Government of this country for support, inasmuch as the presence of the colonists abridges their means of subsistence, whilst it furnishes to the public treasury a large revenue in the shape of fees for licences and assessments on stock, together with the very large sums paid for land seized by the Crown, and alienated to private individuals.

“That it appears to memorialists that the interests at once of the natives and the colonists would be most effectually promoted by the government reserving suitable portions of land within the territorial limits of the respective tribes, with the view of weaning them from their erratic habits, forming thereon depots for supplying them with provisions and clothing, under the charge of individuals of exemplary moral character, taking at the same time an interest in their welfare, and who would endeavour to instruct them in agricultural and other useful arts.”—Extract from Memorial of the Settlers of the County of Grant, in the district of Port Phillip, to His Excellency Sir G. Gipps, in 1840.]

Surely if we acknowledge the first principles of justice, or if we admit the slightest claims of humanity on behalf of these debased, but harshly treated people, we are bound, in honour and in equity, to afford them that subsistence which we have deprived them of the power of providing for themselves.

It may, perhaps, be replied, and at first it might seem, with some appearance of speciousness, that all is done that can be done for them, that each of the Colonial Governments annually devotes a portion of its revenue to the improvement, instruction, and maintenance of the natives. So far this is very praiseworthy, but does it in any degree compensate for the evil inflicted?

The money usually voted by the councils of Government, towards defraying expenses incurred on behalf of the Aborigines of Australia, is but a very small per centage upon the sums that have been received for the sales of lands, and is principally expended in defraying the salaries of protectors, in supporting schools, providing food or clothing for one or two head stations, and perhaps supplying a few blankets once in the year to some of the outstations. Little is expended in the daily provisioning of the natives generally, and especially in the more distant country districts least populated by Europeans, but most densely occupied by natives, and where the very thinness of the European inhabitants precludes the Aborigines from resorting to the same sources to supply their wants, that are open to them in a town, or more thickly inhabited district. Such are those afforded by the charity of individuals, by the rewards received for performing trifling services of work, by the obtaining vast quantities of offal, or of broken victuals, which are always abundant in a country where animal food is used in excess, and where the heat of the climate daily renders much of it unfit for consumption in the family, and by others of a similar nature.

Such resources, however humiliating and pernicious they are in their effects, are not open to the tribes living in a district almost exclusively occupied by the sheep or cattle of the settler, and where the very numbers of the stock only more completely drive away the original game upon which the native had been accustomed to subsist, and hold out a greater temptation to him to supply his wants from the superabundance which he sees around him, belonging to those by whom he has been dispossessed. The following appropriate remarks are an extract from Report of Aborigines' Protection Society, of March, 1841, (published in the South Australian Register, 4th December, 1841.)

"Under that system it is obvious to every coloured man, even the least intelligent, that the extending settlements of the Europeans involve a sentence of banishment, and eventual extermination, upon his tribe and race. Major Mitchell, in his travels, refers to this apprehension on the part of the Aborigines—"White man come, Kangaroo go away"—from which as an inevitable consequence follows—"black man famished away." If, then, this appears a necessary result of the unjust, barbarous, unchristian mode of colonization pursued in New Holland, over-looking the other incidental, and more pointedly aggravating provocations, to the coloured man, associated with that system, how natural, in his case, is an enmity which occasionally visits some of the usurping race with death! We call the offence in him MURDER; but let the occasion be only examined, and we must discover that, in so designating it, we are imposing geographical, or national restrictions, upon the virtue of patriotism; or that in the mani-festations of that principle, we make no allowances for the influence on its features of the relative degradation or elevation of those among whom it is met.

"Our present colonization system renders the native and the colonizing races from necessity belligerents; and there can be no real peace, no real amity, no mutual security, so long as that system is not substituted by one reconciling the interest of both races. Colonists will fall before the spears and the waddies of incensed Aborigines, and they in return will be made the victims of 'summary justice.'

"In cases of executive difficulty, the force of popular prejudice will be apt to be too strong for the best intentioned Governor to withstand it; Europeans will have sustained injury; the strict forms of legal justice may be found of difficult application to a race outcast or degraded, although ORIGINALLY in a condition fitted to appreciate them, to benefit by them, and

reflect their benefits upon others; impatient at this difficulty, the delay it may occasion, and the shelter from ultimate punishment, the temptation will ever be strong to revert to summary methods of proceeding; and thus, as in a circle, injustice will be found to flow reciprocal injury, and from injury injustice again, in another form. The source of all these evils, and of all this injustice, is the unreserved appropriation of native lands, and the denial, in the first instance of colonization, of equal civil rights. To the removal of those evils, so far as they can be removed in the older settlements, to their prevention in new colonies, the friends of the Aborigines are invoked to direct their energy; to be pacified with the attainment of nothing less; for nothing less will really suffice."

Can it be deemed surprising that a rude, uncivilized being, driven from his home, deprived of all his ordinary means of subsistence [Note 45 at end of para.], and pressed perhaps by a hostile tribe from behind, should occasionally be guilty of aggressions or injuries towards his oppressors? The wonder rather is, not that these things do sometimes occur, but that they occur so rarely.

[Note 45: "If you can still be generous to the conquered, relieve the hunger which drives us in despair to slaughter your flocks and the men who guard them. Our fields and forests, which once furnished us with abundance of vegetable and animal food, now yield us no more; they and their produce are yours; you prosper on our native soil, and we are famishing." — STRZELECKI'S N. S. WALES, p. 356.]

In addition to the many other inconsistencies in our conduct towards the Aborigines, not the least extraordinary is that of placing them, on the plea of protection, under the influence of our laws, and of making them British subjects. Strange anomaly, which by the former makes amenable to penalties they are ignorant of, for crimes which they do not consider as such, or which they may even have been driven to commit by our own injustice; and by the latter but mocks them with an empty sound, since the very laws under which we profess to place them, by their nature and construction are inoperative in affording redress to the injured.

[Note 46: "To subject savage tribes to the penalties of laws with which they are unacquainted, for offences which they, very possibly, regard as acts of justifiable retaliation for invaded rights, is a proceeding indefensible, except under circumstances of urgent and extreme necessity."—Fourth Report of the Colonization Commissioners, presented to the House of Commons, 29th July, 1840.

"The late act, declaring them naturalized as British subjects, has only rendered them legally amenable to the English criminal law, and added one more anomaly to all the other enactments affecting them. This naturalization excludes them from sitting on a jury, or appearing as witnesses, and entails a most confused form of judicial proceedings; all which, taken together, has made of the Aborigines of Australia a nondescript caste, who, to use their own phraseology, are 'neither black nor white.'”—Strzelecki's N. S. Wales.]

If, in addition to the many evils and disadvantages the natives must necessarily be subject to from our presence, we take still further into account the wrongs they are exposed to from the ill feeling towards them which has sometimes existed among the settlers, or their servants, on the outskirts of the country; the annoyances they are harassed by, even where this feeling does not exist, in being driven away from their usual haunts and pursuits (and this is a practice often adopted by the remote grazier as a mere matter of policy to avoid trouble or the risk of a collision); we shall find upon the whole that they have often just causes of offence, and that there are many circumstances connected with their crimes which, from the peculiar position they are placed in, may well require from us some mitigation of the punishment that would be exacted from Europeans for the same misdeeds.

Captain Grey has already remarked the strong prejudice and recklessness of human life which frequently exist on the part of the settlers with regard to the natives. Nor has this feeling been confined to Western Australia alone. In all the colonies, that I have been in, I have myself observed that a harsh and unjust tone has occasionally been adopted in speaking of the Aborigines; and that where a feeling of prejudice does not exist against them, there is too often a great indifference manifested as to their fate. I do not wish it to be understood that such is always the case; on the contrary, I know that the better, and right thinking part of the community, in all the colonies, not only disavow such feelings, but are most anxious, as far as lies in their power, to promote the interests and welfare of the natives. Still, there are always some, in every settlement, whose passions, prejudices, interests, or fears, obliterate their sense of right and wrong, and by whom these poor wanderers of the woods are looked upon as intruders in their own country, or as vermin that infest the land, and whose blood may be shed with as little compunction as that of the wild animals they are compared to.

By those who have heard the dreadful accounts current in Western Australia, and New South Wales, of the slaughter formerly committed by military parties, or by the servants [Note 47 at end of para.] of the settlers upon the Aborigines, in which it is stated that men, women, and children have been surprised, surrounded and shot down indiscriminately, at their camps at night; or who have heard such deeds, or other similar ones, justified or boasted of, it will readily be believed to what an extent the feeling I have alluded to has occasionally been carried, and to what excesses it has led. [Note 48 appears after Note 47, below]

[Note 47: The following extract from a reply of his Honour the Superintendent of Port Phillip to the representation made to his Honour by the settlers and inhabitants of the district of Port Fairy, in March 1842, shews that these frightful atrocities against the natives had not even then ceased.

“That the presence of a protector in your district, and other means of prevention hitherto employed, have not succeeded better than they have done in repressing aggression or retaliation, and have failed to establish a good understanding between the natives and the European settlers, is greatly to be deplored.

“As far as the local government has power, every practicable extension of these arrangements shall be made without delay; but, gentlemen, however harsh, a plain truth must be told, the destruction of European property, and even the occasional sacrifice of European life, by the hands of the savage tribes, among whom you live, if unprovoked and unrevenged, may justly claim sympathy and pity; but the feeling of abhorrence which one act of savage retaliation or cruelty on your part will rouse, must weaken, if not altogether obliterate every other, in the minds of most men; and I regret to state, that I have before me a statement presented in a form which I dare not discredit, shewing that such acts are perpetrated among you.

“It reveals a nightly attack upon a small number of natives, by a party of the white inhabitants of your district, and the murder of no fewer than three defenceless aboriginal women and a child, in their sleeping place; and this at the very time your memorial was in the act of signature, and in the immediate vicinity of the station of two of the parties who have signed it. Will not the commission of such crimes call down the wrath of God, and do more to check the prosperity of your district, and to ruin your prospects, than all the difficulties and losses under which you labour?” Mr. Sievewright’s letter gives an account of this infamous transaction.

“WESTERN ABORIGINAL ESTABLISHMENT, THOLOR, 26TH FEBRUARY, 1842.
“Sir,—I have the honour to report that on the afternoon of the 24th instant, two aboriginal natives, named Pwe-bin-gan-nai, Calangamite, returned to this encampment, which they had left with their families on the 22nd, and reported ‘that late on the previous evening, while they with their wives, two other females, and two children, were asleep at a tea-tree scrub, called One-one-derang, a party of eight white people on horseback surrounded them, dismounted,

and fired upon them with pistols; that three women and a child had been thus killed, and the other female so severely wounded as to be unable to stand or be removed by them; they had saved themselves and the child, named 'Uni bicqui-ang,' by flight, who was brought to this place upon their shoulders.

"At daybreak yesterday I proceeded to the spot indicated, and there found the dead bodies of three women, and a male child about three years of age; and also found a fourth woman dangerously wounded by gunshot wounds, and severely scorched on the limbs by the discharge of fire-arms.

"Having proceeded to the station of the Messrs. Osbrey and Smith, distant about 700 yards from where the bodies were found, and requested the presence of those gentlemen as witnesses, I proceeded to view the bodies, upon which were found the wounds as set forth in the accompanying report.

"All knowledge of this barbarous transaction is denied by the proprietors, overseer, and servants at the home station, so near to which the bodies were found, nor have I as yet obtained any information which may lead to the discovery of the perpetrators of these murders.

"I have, etc.

(Signed) "C. W. SIEVEWRIGHT."

James Croke, Esq.,

Crown Prosecutor,"

etc. etc. etc.

Description of Gun-shot Wounds upon the bodies of three Aboriginal Women and One Male Child found dead, and an Aboriginal Woman found wounded in a tea tree scrub, near the Station of Messrs. Osbrey and Smith, Portland District, upon the 25th of February, 1842, by Assistant-Protector Sievewright.

"No. 1. Recognised by the assistant-protector as 'Wooi-goning,' wife of an Aboriginal native 'Pui-bui-gannei;' one gun-shot wound through the chest (a ball), and right thigh broken by a gun-shot wound (a ball).

"No. 2. Child (male); one gun-shot wound through the chest (a bullet), left thigh lacerated by some animal.

"No. 3. Woman big with child; one gun-shot wound through the chest (a bullet), left side scorched.

"No. 4. Woman; gun-shot wound through abdomen (a bullet), by right hip; gun-shot wound, left arm broken, (a bullet.)

"No. 5. Woman wounded; gun-shot wound in back (a ball), gun-shot through right hand (a ball).

"(Signed)

"C. W. SIEVEWRIGHT."]

[Note 48: The belief on the part of the Home authorities that such deeds did occur, and their opinion, so many years ago, regarding them, may be gathered from the following extract from a despatch from Lord Glenelg to Governor Sir James Stirling, dated 23rd of July, 1835. "I perceive, with deep concern, that collisions still exist between the colonists and the natives.

“It is impossible, however, to regard such conflicts without regret and anxiety, when we recollect how fatal, in too many instances, our colonial settlements have proved to the natives of the places where they have been formed.

“It will be your duty to impress upon the settlers that it is the determination of the Government to visit any act of injustice or violence on the natives, with the utmost severity, and that in no case will those convicted of them, remain unpunished. Nor will it be sufficient simply to punish the guilty, but ample compensation must be made to the injured party, for the wrong received. You will make it imperative upon the officers of police never to allow any injustice or insult in regard to the natives to pass by unnoticed, as being of too trifling a character; and they should be charged to report to you, with punctuality, every instance of aggression or misconduct. Every neglect of this point of duty you will mark with the highest displeasure.”

Such were the benevolent views entertained by the Government in England towards the Aborigines ten years ago, and it might be readily proved from many despatches of subsequent Secretaries of State to the different Governors, that such have been their feelings since, and yet how little has been done in ten years to give a practical effect to their good intentions towards the natives.]

Were other evidence necessary to substantiate this point, it would be only requisite to refer to the tone in which the natives are so often spoken of by the Colonial newspapers, to the fact that a large number of colonists in New South Wales, including many wealthy landed proprietors and magistrates, petitioned the Local Government on behalf of a party of convicts, found guilty on the clearest testimony of having committed one of the most wholesale, cold-blooded, and atrocious butcheries of the Aborigines ever recorded [Note 49 at end of para.], and to the acts of the Colonial Governments themselves, who have found it necessary, sometimes, to prohibit fire-arms at out-stations, and have been compelled to take away the assigned servants, or withdraw the depasturing licences of individuals, because they have been guilty of aggression upon the Aborigines.

[Note 49: Seven men were hanged for this offence, on the 18th of December, 1838. In the Sydney Monitor, published on the 24th or next issue after the occurrence, is the following paragraph:—

“The following conversation between two gentlemen took place in the military barrack square, on Tuesday, just after the execution of the seven murderers of the native blacks, and while General O’Connell was reviewing the troops of the garrison.

“COUNTRY GENTLEMAN.—So I find they have hanged these men.

“TOWN GENTLEMAN.—They have.”

“COUNTRY GENTLEMAN.—Ah! hem, we are going on a safer game now.

“TOWN GENTLEMAN.—Safer game! how do you mean?”

“COUNTRY GENTLEMAN.—Why, we are poisoning the blacks; which is much better, and serve them right too!”

“We vouch for the truth of this conversation, and for the very words; and will prove our statement, if public justice should, in our opinion require it.”

The following letter from His Honour the Superintendent of Port Philip shews, that even in 1843, suspicions were entertained in the colony, that this most horrible and inhuman cruelty towards the Aborigines had lately been practised there.

“Melbourne, 17th March, 1843.

“SIR,—I have the honour to report, for his Excellency’s information, that in the month of December last, I received a letter from the Chief Protector, enclosing a communication received from Dr. Wotton, the gentleman in charge of the Aboriginal station at Mount Rouse, stating that a rumour had reached him that a considerable number of Aborigines had been poisoned at the station of Dr. Kilgour, near Port Fairy.

“I delayed communicating this circumstance at the time, as I expected the Chief Protector and his assistants would find it practicable to bring the crime home to the parties accused of having perpetrated it; but I regret to state, that every attempt to discover the guilty parties has hitherto proved ineffectual, and that although there may be strong grounds of suspicion that such a deed had been perpetrated, and that certain known parties in this district were the perpetrators, yet it seems nearly impossible to obtain any legal proof to bear on either one point or the other.

“I beg leave to enclose copies of two communications which I have received from Mr. Robinson on the subject.

“I have, etc.

“(Signed)

“C. J. LATROBE.”

“The Honourable the Colonial Secretary,
etc. etc. etc.”

Rumours of another similar occurrence existed in the settlements north of Sydney, about the same time. To the inquiries made on the subject, by the Government, the following letters refer.

“Moreton Bay, Zion’s Hill, 14th January 1843.

“Sir,—In reply to your inquiry respecting the grounds on which I made mention in my journal, kept during a visit to the Bunga Bunga country, of a considerable number of blacks having been poisoned in the northern part of this district, I beg leave to state, that having returned from Sydney in the month of March 1842, I learnt, first, by my coadjutor, the Rev. Mr. Epper, that such a rumour was spreading, of which I have good reason to believe also his Excellency the Governor was informed during his stay at Moreton Bay. I learnt, secondly, by the lay missionaries, Messrs. Nique and Rode, who returned from an excursion to “Umpie-boang” in the first week of April, that natives of different tribes, who were collecting from the north for a fight, had related the same thing to them as a fact. Messrs. Nique and Rode have made this statement also in their diary, which is laid before our committee in Sydney. I learnt, thirdly, by the runaway Davis, when collecting words and phrases of the northern dialect from him, previous to my expedition to the Bunga Bunga country, that there was not the least doubt but such a deed had been done, and moreover that the relatives of the poisoned blacks, being in great fury, were going to revenge themselves. Davis considered it, therefore, exceedingly dangerous for us to proceed to the north, mentioning at the same time, that two white men had already been killed by blacks in consequence of poisoning. I ascertained likewise from him the number, 50 or 60.

“When inquiring of him whether he had not reported this fact to yourself, he replied, that both he, himself, and Bracewell, the other runaway, whom Mr. Petrie had brought back from the Wide Bay, had done so, and that you had stated it fully in your report to his Excellency the Governor, respecting himself and Bracewell.

“4. The natives who had carried our provisions up to Mr. Archer’s station, made the same statement to us, as a reason why they would not accompany us any farther to the Bunga Bunga country.

“When writing down, therefore, my journal, I considered it unnecessary to make a full statement of all that had come to my knowledge since the month of March, concerning that most horrid event, or even to relate it as something new, as it was not only known several months since to the respective authorities, but also as almost every one at Moreton Bay supposed that an investigation would take place without delay.

“I have, etc.

“(signed) “WILLIAM SCHMIDT,
“Missionary.””S. Simpson, Esq.,

“Commissioner of Crown Lands,
“Eagle Farm.”

“WOOGAROO, MORETON BAY, 6TH MAY, 1843.

“Sir,—I have the honour to report, for the information of his Excellency, that during my excursion to the Bunga country, I have taken every opportunity of instituting an inquiry as to the truth of the alleged poisoning of some Aborigines at a sheep station in the north of this district. A report of the kind certainly exists among the two tribes I fell in with, namely, the Dallambarah and Cocombraral tribes, but as neither of them were present at the time, they could give me no circumstantial information whatever on the subject. The Giggabarah tribe, the one said to have suffered, I was unable to meet with. Upon inquiry at the stations to the north, I could learn nothing further than that they had been using arsenic very extensively for the cure of the scab, in which operation sheep are occasionally destroyed by some of the fluid getting down their throats; and as the men employed frequently neglect to bury the carcasses, it is very possible that the Aborigines may have devoured them, particularly the entrails, which they are very fond of, and that hence some accident of the kind alluded to may have occurred without their knowledge.

“I have, etc.

“(signed) S. SIMPSON,
“Commissioner of Crown Lands.”
“The Honourable E. D. Thomson,
“Colonial Secretary.”

For the sake of humanity I would hope that such unheard of atrocities cannot really have existed. That the bare suspicion even of such crimes should have originated and gained currency in more than one district of Australia, is of itself a fearful indication of the feeling among the lowest classes in the colonies, and of the harrowing deeds to which that might lead.

Extract from South Australian Registe, 10th of July, 1841, after the return of Major O’Halloran and a party of sixty-eight individuals, sent up the Murray to try and rescue property stolen by blacks. “In the mean time we cannot but think that the DISAPPOINTMENT SO GENERALLY EXPRESSED, because Major O’Halloran has returned ‘WITHOUT FIRING A SHOT,’ is somewhat unreasonable, seeing that in his presence the natives DID NOTHING TO WARRANT AN EXTREME MEASURE, and that there were no means of identifying either the robbers of Mr. Inman, or the murderers of Mr. Langhorne’s servants. It is quite clear that a legally authorised English force could not be permitted to fire indiscriminately upon the natives AS SOME PERSONS THINK they ought to have done, or to fire at all, save when attacked, or under circumstances in which any white subject of the Queen might be shot at. We KNOW that many overland parties HAVE NOT HESITATED TO FIRE AT THE NATIVES WHEREVER THEY APPEARED; and it is possible that the tribes now hostilely disposed may have received some provocation.”]

The following extract from a letter addressed by the Chief Protector of the Port Phillip district, Mr. Robinson, to his Honour the Superintendent at Melbourne, shews that officer's opinion of the feeling of the lower class of the settlers' servants, with regard to the Aborigines in Australia Felix.

"Anterior to my last expedition I had seen a large portion of this province; I have now seen nearly the entire, and, in addition, have made myself thoroughly acquainted with the character of its inhabitants.

"The settlers are, for the most part, a highly respectable body of men, many, to my knowledge, deeply commiserating the condition of the natives; a few have been engaged in the work of their amelioration; these, however, are but isolated instances; the majority are averse to having the natives, and drive them from their runs.

"Nothing could afford me greater pleasure than to see a reciprocity of interest established between the settler and aborigine, and it would delight me to see the settlers engaged in the great work of their amelioration; and though on the part of the settlers, a large majority would readily engage, I nevertheless feel persuaded that, until a better class of peasantry be introduced, and a code of judicature suited to the condition of the natives, its practicability, as a general principle, is unattainable.

"In the course of my wanderings through the distant interior, I found it necessary, in order to arrive at a correct judgment, to observe the relative character of both classes, i. e. the European and the Aborigine. The difficulty on the part of the Aborigine by proper management can be overcome; but the difficulty on the part of the depraved white man is of far different character, and such as to require that either their place should be supplied by a more honest and industrious peasantry, or that a more suitable code of judicature be established, to restrain their nefarious proceedings with reference to the aboriginal natives.

"I found, on my last expedition, that a large majority of the white servants employed at the stock stations in the distant interior were, for the most part, men of depraved character; and it was with deep regret that I observed that they were all armed; and in the estimation of some of these characters, with whom I conversed, I found that the life of a native was considered to be of no more value than that of a wild dog. The settlers complained generally of the bad character of their men. The saying is common among them, 'That the men and not we are the masters.' The kind of treatment evinced towards the aboriginal natives in remote parts of the interior by this class of persons, may be easily imagined; but as I shall have occasion more fully to advert to this topic in the report I am about to transmit to the Government, I shall defer for the present offering further observations.

"The bad character of the white servants is a reason assigned by many settlers for keeping the natives from their stations. At a few establishments, viz. Norman M'Leod's, Baillie's, Campbell's, Lenton's, and Urquhart's, an amicable and friendly relation has been maintained for several years; the Aborigines are employed and found useful. I visited these stations; and the proprietors assured me the natives had never done them any injury; the natives also spoke in high terms of these parties. There are other settlers also who have rendered assistance in improving the condition of the natives, and to whom I shall advert in my next report.

"Whether the proprietors of these establishments devote more attention, or whether their white servants are of less nefarious character than others, I am not prepared to say; but the facts I have stated are incontrovertible, and are sufficient to shew the reclaimability of the natives, when proper persons are engaged, and suitable means had recourse to. I cannot but accede to the proposition, namely, that of holding out inducements to all who engage in the amelioration of the aboriginal natives. Those who have had experience, who have been tried and found useful, ought to have such inducements held out to them as would ensure a

continuance of their appointments, the more especially as it has always been found difficult to obtain suitable persons for this hazardous and peculiar service."

The following extract from another letter, also addressed to his Honour the Superintendent, shews the opinions and feelings of the writer, a Magistrate of the Colony, and a Commissioner of Crown Lands, in the Geelong district.

"In offering my candid opinion, I submissively beg leave to state, that for the last three years, on all occasions, I have been a friend to the natives; but from my general knowledge of their habits of idleness, extreme cunning, vice, and villany, that it is out of the power of all exertion that can be bestowed on them to do good by them; and I further beg leave to state, that I can plainly see the general conduct of the native growing worse, and, if possible, more useless, and daily more daring. One and all appear to consider that no punishment awaits them. This idea has latterly been instilled into their minds with, I should think, considerable pains, and also that the white men should be punished for the least offence.

"In reply to the latter part of your letter, I beg leave to bring to your notice that, at considerable risk, two years ago, I apprehended a native for the murder of one of Mr. Learmonth's men, near Bunengang. He was committed to Sydney gaol, and at the expiration of a year he was returned to Melbourne to be liberated, and is now at large. In the case of Mr. Thomson's, that I apprehended two, and both identified by the men who so fortunately escaped. It is a difficult thing to apprehend natives, and with great risk of life on both sides. On the Grange, and many parts of the country, it would be impossible to take them; AND IN MY OPINION, the only plan to bring them to a fit and proper state is to insist on the gentlemen in the country to protect their property, AND TO DEAL WITH SUCH USELESS SAVAGES ON THE SPOT."

Captain Grey bears testimony to similar feelings and occurrences in Western Australia. In speaking of capturing some natives, he says, vol. 2. p. 351. "It was necessary that I should proceed with great caution, in order not to alarm the guilty parties when they saw us approaching, in which case, I should have had no chance of apprehending them, and I did not intend to adopt the popular system of shooting them when they ran away." And again, at page 356, he says, "It was better that I, an impartial person, should see that they were properly punished for theft, than that the Europeans should fire indiscriminately upon them, as had lately been done, in another quarter."

Even in South Australia, where the Colonists have generally been more concentrated, and where it might naturally be supposed there would be less likelihood of offenders of this kind escaping detection and punishment, there are not wanting instances of unnecessary and unprovoked, and sometimes of wanton injury upon the natives. In almost all cases of this description, it is quite impracticable from the inadmissibility of native evidence, or from some other circumstances, to bring home conviction to the guilty. [Note 50 at end of para.] On the other hand, where natives commit offences against Europeans, if they can be caught, the punishment is certain and severe. Already since the establishment of South Australia as a colony, six natives have been tried and hung, for crimes against Europeans, and many others have been shot or wounded, by the police and military in their attempts to capture or prevent their escape. No European has, however, yet paid the penalties of the law, for aggressions upon the Aborigines, though many have deserved to do so. The difficulty consists in legally bringing home the offence, or in refuting the absurd stories that are generally made up in justification of it.

[Note 50: Vide Chapter 9, of Notes on the Aborigines.]

A single instance or two will be sufficient, in illustration of the impunity which generally attends these acts of violence. On the 25th January, 1843, the sheep at a station of Mr. Hughes, upon the Hutt river, had been scattered during the night, and some of them were missing. It was concluded the natives had been there, and taken them, as the tracks of naked feet were said to have been found near the folds. Upon these grounds two of Mr. Hughes' men, and one belonging to Mr. Jacobs, another settler in the neighbourhood, took arms, and went out to search for the natives. About a mile from the station they met with one native and his wife, whom they asked to accompany them back to the station, promising bread and flour for so doing. They consented to go, but were then escorted AS PRISONERS, the two men of Mr. Hughes' guarding the male native, and Mr. Jacobs' servant (a person named Gregory) the female. Naturally alarmed at the predicament they were in, the man ran off, pursued by his two guards, but escaped. The woman took another direction, pursued by Gregory, who recaptured her, and she was said to have then seized Gregory's gun, and to have struck at him several blows with a heavy stick, upon which, being afraid that he would be overcome, HE SHOT HER. Mr. Hughes, the owner of the lost sheep, came up a few moments after the woman was shot, and heard Gregory's story concerning it, but no marks of his receiving any blows were shewn. On the 23rd of March, he was tried for the offence of manslaughter; there did not appear the slightest extenuating circumstances beyond his own story, and his master giving him a good character, and yet the jury, without retiring, returned a verdict of Not Guilty!

At the very next sittings of the Supreme Court Criminal Sessions, another and somewhat analogous case appeared. The following remarks were made by His Honour Judge Cooper, to the Grand Jury respecting it: "There was also a case of manslaughter to be tried, and he called their attention to this, because it did not appear in the Calendar. The person charged was named Skelton, and as appeared from the depositions, was in custody of some sheep, when an alarm of the rushing of the sheep being given, he looked and saw something climbing over the fence, and subsequently something crawling along the ground, upon which he fired off his piece, and hit the object, which upon examination turned out to be a native. The night was dark, and the native was brought into the hut, where he died the next day. He could not help observing, that cases of this kind were much more frequent than was creditable to the reputation of the Colony. Last Sessions a man was tried and acquitted of the charge of killing a native woman. That verdict was a very merciful one, but not so merciful, he trusted, as to countenance the idea that the lives of the natives are held too cheaply. The only observation that he would make upon this case was, that it was ONE OF GREAT SUSPICION."

[Note 51: I believe this case was not brought to trial.]

Other cases have occurred in which some of the circumstances have come under my own notice, and when Europeans have committed wanton aggressions on the Aborigines, and have then made up a plausible story to account for what had taken place, but where, from obvious circumstances, it was quite impossible to disprove or rebut their tale, however improbable it might be. In the Port Phillip District in 1841, Mr. Chief Protector thus writes to the local Government.

"Already appalling collisions have happened between the white and aboriginal inhabitants, and, although instances, it is possible, have transpired when natives have been the aggressors, yet it will be found that the largest majority originated with the Europeans. The lives of aboriginal natives known to have been destroyed are many, and if the testimony of natives be admissible, the amount would be great indeed; but even in cases where the Aborigines are said to be the aggressors, who can tell what latent provocation existed for perpetrating it? Of the numerous cases that could be cited, the following from a recent journal of an assistant protector, Mr. Parker, of the Loddon, will suffice to shew the insurmountable difficulty, I may add the impossibility, of bringing the guilty parties to justice, for in nine cases, I may say, out

of ten, where natives are concerned, the only evidence that can be adduced is that of the Aborigines.

“This evidence is not admissible. Indeed the want of a code, suited to the Aborigines, is now so strongly felt, and of such vital importance to the welfare and existence of the natives, that I earnestly trust that this important subject may be brought under the early consideration and notice of Her Majesty’s Government.

“The following is the extract from Mr. Parker’s journal referred to: ‘On the 8th of March 1841, I proceeded to the Pyrenees to investigate the circumstances connected with the slaughter of several Aborigines, by a Mr. Frances. On the 9th and 10th I fell in with different parties of natives. From the last of these I obtained some distressing statements, as to the slaughter of the blacks; they gave me the names of seven individuals shot by Mr. Frances within the last six months. I found, however, no legal evidence attainable. The only persons present in the last and most serious affair with the Aborigines, which took place in December of last year, were Frances, a person named Downes, and a stock-keeper in Melbourne. No other admissible evidence of the death of these poor people can be obtained than what Frances’s written statement conveys. In that he reports that he and the person before named WENT OUT IN CONSEQUENCE OF SEEING THE BUSH ON FIRE, AND FELL IN SUDDENLY WITH SOME NATIVES, ON WHOM THEY FIRED AND KILLED FOUR. The natives say six were slain, and their information on that point is more to be depended on. Owing to the legal disabilities of the Aborigines, this case must be added with many others which have passed without judicial notice. I cannot, however, but wish that squatting licenses were withheld from persons who manifest such an utter disregard of human life as Mr. Frances, even on his own shewing, has done.’

“And in this latter sentiment, under existing circumstances, I most cordially agree. In Frances’ case, the PERPETRATOR ADMITS his having SHOT FOUR ABORIGINES, and for aught that is shewn to the contrary, it was AN UNPROVOKED AGGRESSION. The natives, whose testimony Mr. Parker states, can be relied upon, affirm that six were slain, and these within the brief period of six months.

“In my last expedition I visited the country of the ‘Barconedeets,’ the tribe attacked by Frances; of these I found a few sojourning with the ‘Portbullucs,’ a people inhabiting the country near Mount Zero, the northernmost point of the Grampians. These persons complained greatly of the treatment they had received, and confirmed the statement made to the sub-protector by the other natives. The following are a few of the collisions, from authentic documents brought under the notice of this department, that have happened between settlers and Aborigines, and are respectfully submitted for the information of the Government. “CASES.—CHARLES WEDGE AND OTHERS.—Five natives killed and others wounded at the Grampians.

“AYLWARD AND OTHERS.—Several natives killed and others wounded at the Grampians. In this case Aylward deposed, ‘that there must have been a great many wounded and several killed, as he saw blood upon the grass, and in the tea-tree two or three dead bodies.’

“MESSRS. WHYTE’S FIRST COLLISION.—William Whyte deposed that 30 natives were present, and they were all killed but two, and one of these it is reported died an hour after of his wounds.

“DARLOT.—One native shot. Two natives shot near Portland Bay by the servants of the Messrs. Henty.

“HUTTON AND MOUNTED POLICE.—The written report of this case states, ‘that the party overtook the aborigines at the junction of the ‘Campaspee;’ they fired, and it is stated,

that to the best of the belief of the party, five or six were killed.' In the opinion of the sub-protector a greater number were slain.

"MESSRS. WINTER AND OTHERS.—On this occasion five natives were killed.

"One black shot by Frances.

"MUNROE AND POLICE.—Two blacks shot and others wounded.

"The following from Lloyd's deposition:—'We fired on them; I have no doubt some were killed; there were between forty and fifty natives.'

"BY PERSONS UNKNOWN.—A native of the Coligan tribe killed by white persons.

"MESSRS. WEDGE AND OTHERS.—Three natives killed and others wounded.

"Names of Taylor and Lloyd are mentioned as having shot a black at Lake Colac.

"WHYTE'S SECOND COLLISION.—ALLAN'S CASE.—Two natives shot.

"Taylor was overseer of a sheep station in the Western district, and was notorious for killing natives. No legal evidence could be obtained against this nefarious individual. The last transaction in which he was concerned, was of so atrocious a nature, that he thought fit to abscond, and he has not been heard of since. No legal evidence was attainable in this latter case. There is no doubt the charges preferred were true, for in the course of my inquiries on my late expedition, I found a tribe, a section of the Jarcoorts, totally extinct, and it was affirmed by the natives that Taylor had destroyed them. The tribes are rapidly diminishing. The 'Coligans,' once a numerous and powerful people, inhabiting the fertile region of Lake 'Colac,' are now reduced, all ages and sexes, under forty, and these are still on the decay. The Jarcoorts, inhabiting the country to the west of the great lake 'Carangermite,' once a very numerous and powerful people, are now reduced to under sixty. But time would fail, and I fear it would be deemed too prolix, were I to attempt to particularise in ever so small a degree, the previous state, condition, and declension of the original inhabitants of so extensive a province."

Upon the same subject, His Honour the Superintendent of Port Phillip thus writes:—

"On this subject, I beg leave to remark that great impediments evidently do interpose themselves in the way of instituting proper judicial inquiry into the causes and consequences of the frequent acts of collision between the settlers and the aboriginal natives, and into the conduct of the settlers on such occasions. I am quite ready to lament with the Protectors, that numerous as the cases have unfortunately been in which the lives of the Aborigines have been taken in this district, **IN NO SINGLE INSTANCE HAS THE SETTLER BEEN BROUGHT BEFORE THE PROPER TRIBUNAL.**"

Many similar instances might be adduced to shew the little chance there is of evidence enough being procurable, even to cause the aggressor to be put upon his trial, still less to produce his conviction.

Independently of the instances of wanton outrage, which sometimes are perpetrated on the outskirts of the settled districts by the lowest and most abandoned of our countrymen, there are occasions also, when equal injuries are inflicted unintentionally, from inexperience or indiscretion, on the part of those whose duty it is to protect rather than destroy, when the innocent have been punished instead of the guilty [Note 52 at end of para.], and thus the very efforts made to preserve peace and good order, have inadvertently become the means of subverting them.

[Note 52: Upon collisions of this character, Lord John Russell remarks in his despatch, 21st December, 1839, to Sir G. Gipps: "In the case now before me the object of capturing offenders was entirely lost sight of, and shots were fired at men who were apparently only guilty of jumping into the water to escape from an armed pursuit. I am, however, happy to acknowledge that you appear to have made every practicable exertion for the prevention of similar calamities in future, and I approve the measures adopted by you for that purpose. You cannot overrate the solicitude of Her Majesty's Government on the subject of the Aborigines of New Holland. It is impossible to contemplate the condition and the prospects of that unfortunate race without the deepest commiseration. I am well aware of the many difficulties which oppose themselves to the effectual protection of these people, and especially of those which must originate from the exasperation of the settlers, on account of aggressions on their property, which are not the less irritating, because they are nothing else than the natural results of the pernicious examples held out to the Aborigines, and of the many wrongs of which they have been the victims. Still it is impossible that the Government should forget that the original aggression was our own; and that we have never yet performed the sacred duty of making any systematic or considerable attempt to impart to the former occupiers of New South Wales, the blessings of Christianity, or the knowledge of the arts and advantages of civilized life."]

Several very lamentable instances of this kind, have occurred in Port Lincoln. The following is one among others. Soon after the murder of Messrs. Biddle and Brown, a party of soldiers was sent over to try and capture the aggressors. In one of their attempts a native guide was procured from the Eastern tribe, who promised to conduct them to where the murderers were. The party consisting of the military and their officer, the police, a settler, and the missionary, in all twelve or fourteen persons, set off towards Coffin's Bay, following as they supposed upon the track of the murderers. Upon reaching the coast some natives were seen fishing in the water, and the party was at once spread out in a kind of semicircle, among the scrub, to close upon and capture them; the officer, missionary, and guide, being stationed near the centre. As the party advanced nearer, the guide saw that he was mistaken in the group before him, and that they were not the guilty parties, but friends. The officer called out not to fire, but unfortunately from the distance the men were at, and the scrubby nature of the country, he was not heard or attended to. A shot was fired, one of the natives sprung up convulsively in the water, walked on shore and fell down, exclaiming whilst dying, "me Kopler, me good man," and such indeed it proved. He was one of a friendly tribe, and a particular protege of the missionary's, having taken the name of Kopler from his German servant who was so called.

The other natives at once came forward to their dying friend, scornfully motioning away his murderers, fearless alike of the foes around them, and regardless of their ill-timed attempts to explain the fatal mistake. Will it be credited, that at such a scene as this the soldiers were indulging in coarse remarks, or brutal jests, upon the melancholy catastrophe; and comparing the last convulsive spring of the dying man to a salmon leaping in the water. Yet this I was assured was the case by the Government Resident at Port Lincoln, from when I received this account.

Another melancholy and unfortunate case of the same nature occurred at Port Lincoln, on the 11th of April, 1844, where a native was shot by a policeman, for attempting to escape from custody, when taken in charge on suspicion of being implicated in robbing a stranded vessel. An investigation was made into this case by the Commissioner of Police, when it was stated in the depositions, that attempts at rescue were made by the other natives. Upon these grounds, I believe, it was considered that the policeman was justified in what he did.

The following extract relating to this subject, is from a letter addressed to a gentleman in Adelaide, by the Rev. C. Schurmann, one of the German Missionaries, who has for some years past been stationed among the Port Lincoln natives, and is intimately acquainted with their language.

[Note 53: Without adopting the tone of this letter, and which in some respects I cannot approve of, I believe the writer to be deeply interested in the welfare of the Aborigines, and strongly impressed with a conviction of the evils and injuries to which they are subject from our anomalous position with regard to them. I have quoted it, therefore, not for the purpose of casting imputations on the Government, but to shew how powerless they are, and how frequently, under the existing system in force with respect to the Aborigines, those very measures which were conceived and entered upon with the best intentions, produce in their result the most unmitigated evils.]

“You will probably recollect, that some time ago (I think it was in the month of May) the Adelaide newspapers contained a short notice of a Port Lincoln native having been shot by the police in self-defence, and a letter in the ‘Observer,’ mentioned another as being shot by Mr.——, but as the charitable correspondent added, ‘Unfortunately only in the arm, instead of through the body.’ From these statements one would infer that the parties concerned in these transactions were without blame, being perfectly justified—the one to protect his life, and the other his property. However, since my return to Port Lincoln, I have learned that both tales run very differently when told according to truth. I address myself, therefore, to you, with the true facts of the transactions, as I have learned them. partly from the settlers themselves, partly from the natives. My motive for so doing is to ease my own mind, and to gratify the interest which I know you take in the Aborigines of this country.

“The man shot by the police was named Padlalta, and was of so mild and inoffensive a disposition, that he was generally noticed by the settlers on that very account, several of whom I have heard say since, it was a pity that some other native had not been hit in his stead. The same man was captured last year by Major O’llalloran’s party, but was set at liberty as soon as I came up and testified his innocence, for which the poor fellow kissed my hand near a dozen times.

“The day before he met his death he was as usual in the town, doing little jobs for the inhabitants, to get bread or other food. On the evening when he was killed, he had encamped with about half a dozen other natives on the northern side of Happy Valley, a short mile from the town. The police who were sent by the Government Resident to see what number of natives were at the camp state, that while searching the man’s wallet, he seized hold of one gun, and when the other policeman came up to wrest it from him, he the native grasped the other gun too. In the scuffle that ensued, one of the guns went off, when the other natives who had fled returned and presented their spears. They then shot the native who held the gun.

“Now this statement is a very strange one, when it is considered that the native was a very spare and weak man, so that either of the police ought to have been able to keep him at arm’s length; but to say that he seized both their guns is beyond all credibility. The natives were sitting down when the police arrived. How they could therefore find a wallet upon the murdered man, I cannot conceive; since the natives never have their wallets slung, except when moving; and it certainly is not probable, that the man, in spite of the fright he is admitted to have been in, should have thought of taking up his wallet.

“The wallet is said to have contained some sovereigns, taken from the cutter Kate, which was wrecked some time previous to this affair, about forty miles up the coast, and to have been one of those marked by the police, at a native camp near the wreck from which the natives had been scared away, leaving all their things behind. But if the murdered native had taken the sovereigns, why were they not then in his wallet, or why was the wallet not examined the day before when he was in town? [Note 54 at end of para.] I think that there is little doubt that the police found no wallet at all upon the native, and that they coined away one of those found at the camp upon him, with a view to incriminate him.”

[Note 54: There cannot be a greater act of injustice towards the natives than that of applying the English law to them with respect to stolen property. Any one who knows any thing of their habits, and the custom prevalent amongst them, of giving any European clothing, or other articles they may acquire, from one to another, must be fully aware how little the fact of their being found in possession of stolen property is just evidence against them. Articles such as I have mentioned, often pass, in a very short time, through the hands of three or four individuals, and perhaps even through as many tribes.]

“Another native, Charley, who was present when the said affair took place, tells me, that the police sneaked upon, and fired at them, while sitting round the fire; [Note 55 at end of para.] that he jumped up, and endeavoured to make himself known, as a friendly native, by saying, “Yarri (that is the name the natives have given to one of the police), Yarri, I Charley, I Charley,”—but that the effect produced had been the pointing of a gun at him, when of course he ran away. That any of the natives returned, and poised their spears, he firmly denies; but accounts for the murder, by supposing that the dead man made resistance, and offered to spear his assailants. He moreover says, that Padlalta would not have died in consequence of the first shot, but that the police fired repeatedly, which agrees with the settlers, who say they heard three shots. When the bloody deed had been committed (a ball had passed right through his body), the cruel perpetrators ran home, leaving the murdered man helpless.”

[Note 55: There must, I think, be some mistake here in the phraseology. I cannot think any of the police would fire upon a small party of friendly natives whilst unresisting. The probability is, that they surrounded the natives to make prisoners, and fired upon being resisted. This must generally occur if the police have positive orders to make captures. Natives, not very much in contact with Europeans, will almost always resist an attempt to make prisoners of them, or will try to escape. Very many have, at various times, met their death under such circumstances; and too often it has occurred, that the innocent have been the suffering parties. This shews the absurdity of applying European customs and laws to a people situated as the Australian natives are. It shews, too, the necessity of altering our present system and policy towards them, to one that will exercise sufficient influence over them to induce them to give up offenders themselves. I believe such a system may be devised.—Vide Chapter IX.]

“Some time after, a party of three settlers went to the spot, one of whom he recognized, and claimed his acquaintance, and perhaps assistance, by mentioning the party’s Christian name; but, alas! no good Samaritan was found amongst these three; they all passed by on the other side, without alleviating his pain, moistening his parched lips, warming his shivering limbs, or aiding him in any way whatever. There he lay a whole cold and long winter night, without a fire to warm him, or a soul to talk to him. Next morning he was found still alive, but died on the way into town, where he was buried in the jail yard, like a condemned felon.

“What awful and melancholy reflections crowd upon one’s mind in thinking on this transaction. But what conclusions must a poor people, whom a Christian and civilized nation calls savages, arrive at, with such facts before them.

“The other native, wounded by Mr.—in the arm, was doubtless of the party who attacked the flock; but it must have been some hours after that he was shot, for the shepherd had to come home with the flock to inform him of the occurrence, and then search and pursuit had to be made, during which he was overtaken. He is a stupid idiotic sort of man, so that the natives have not deemed him worthy of receiving the honours of their ceremonies, and still call him a boy, or youth, although he is an oldish man.

“On another occasion, when an uninhabited hut, with some wheat in it, had been broken into by some unknown natives, a party went in search of the offenders. It was night when they came on a camp, on the opposite side of the lake to where the hut stands; the natives, acting upon the first impulse, and warned by frequent examples, ran away, when two of the party snapped their pieces, but providentially both guns missed fire. The natives, however, soon

took confidence, and returned, when it was found that two of the most orderly and useful men would have been shot if the guns had gone off. The party took upon themselves to make one of them prisoner, but of course did not venture to bring him before the magistrate.

“These facts incontestably prove, that, notwithstanding the Aborigines are called British subjects, and in spite of the so-called protection system, there is no shadow of protection for them, while they are debarred from the first and most important of all liberties, namely, that of being heard in a Court of civil Justice.

“Several instances have occurred during my residence in this district, in which natives have been arraigned before the administrators of the law, although I was morally convinced of their innocence; in other cases, they have sought redress through me, for wanton attacks on their person and lives, without being listened to.

“Only a few weeks ago a native was very nearly being taken up, on the charge of having thrown a spear at Mr. Smith’s shepherd, without, however, any felonious intent, the distance being too great. This circumstance saved the man, or else he would, no doubt, have been tried and found guilty on the shepherd’s evidence, who would not allow that he could be mistaken in the individual, although the accused native came boldly into town and court (a circumstance that has never before occurred since I have known these natives), although he was an intimate friend of the shepherd and his wife; and although all the other natives could prove where he had been at the time of the attack on the flock, and state who were the guilty parties.

“For those who have had an opportunity of observing the Aborigines in their original state, it is not very difficult to distinguish the guilty from the innocent, for they are a simple-minded race, little skilled in the arts of dissimulation.

“It is bad enough that a great part of the colonists are inimical to the natives; it is worse that the law, as it stands at present, does not extend its protection to them; but it is too bad when the press lends its influence to their destruction. Such, however, is undoubtedly the case. When Messrs. Biddle and Brown were murdered, the newspapers entertained their readers week after week with the details of the bloody massacre, heaping a profusion of vile epithets upon the perpetrators. But of the slaughter by the soldiers, (who killed no less than four innocent natives, while they captured not one guilty party), among the tribes who had had nothing to do with the murders—of the treachery of attacking in the darkness of the night, a tribe who had the day before been hunting kangaroo with their informers, when one of the former guides to the magistrates’ pursuing party was killed amongst others; of the wanton outrage on the mutilated body of one of the victims;—of these things the press was as silent as the grave.”

Without attempting to enlarge more fully upon the subjects entered upon in the preceding pages, I trust that I have sufficiently shewn that the character of the Australian natives has been greatly misrepresented and maligned, that they are not naturally more irreclaimably vicious, revengeful, or treacherous than other nations, but on the contrary, that their position with regard to Europeans, places them under so many disadvantages, subjects them to so many injuries, irritates them with so many annoyances, and tempts them with so many provocations, that it is a matter of surprise, not that they sometimes are guilty of crime, but that they commit it so rarely.

If I have in the least degree succeeded in establishing that such is the case, it must be evident that it is incumbent upon us not only to make allowances when pronouncing an opinion on the character or the crimes of the Aborigines; but what is of far greater and more vital importance, as far as they are concerned, to endeavour to revise and improve such parts of our system and policy towards them as are defective, and by better adapting these to the peculiar circumstances of this people, at once place them upon juster and more equal terms, and thus

excite a reasonable hope that some eventual amelioration may be produced, both in their moral and physical condition.

[Note 56: "We say distinctly and deliberately that nothing comparatively has yet been done—that the natives have hitherto acquired nothing of European civilization, but European vices and diseases, and that the speedy extinction of the whole race is inevitable, save by the introduction of means for their civilization on a scale much more comprehensive and effectual than any yet adopted."—Leading Article in South Australian Register, 1st August, 1840.]

I shall now proceed to give an account of the appearance, habits, mode of life, means of subsistence, social relations, government, ceremonies, superstitions, numbers, languages, etc. etc. of the natives of Australia, so as to afford some insight into the character and circumstances of this peculiar race, to exhibit the means hitherto adopted for, and the progress made in attempting, their civilization, and to shew the effects produced upon them by a contact with Europeans.

Chapter II.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE—DRESS—CHARACTER—HABITS OF LIFE—MEETINGS OF TRIBES—WARS—DANCES—SONGS.

The Aborigines of Australia, with whom Europeans have come in contact, present a striking similarity to each other in physical appearance and structure; and also in their general character, habits, and pursuits. Any difference that is found to exist is only the consequence of local circumstances or influences, and such as might naturally be expected to be met with among a people spread over such an immense extent of country. Compared with other aboriginal races, scattered over the face of the globe, the New Hollander appears to stand alone.

The male is well built and muscular, averaging from five to six feet in height, with proportionate upper and lower extremities. The anterior lobes of the brain are fairly developed, so as to give a facial angle, far from being one of the most acute to be found amongst the black races. The eyes are sunk, the nose is flattened, and the mouth wide. The lips are rather thick, and the teeth generally very perfect and beautiful, though the dental arrangement is sometimes singular, as no difference exists in many between the incisor and canine teeth. The neck is short, and sometimes thick, and the heel resembles that of Europeans. The ankles and wrists are frequently small, as are also the hands and feet. The latter are well formed and expanded, but the calves of the legs are generally deficient. Some of the natives in the upper districts of the Murray, are, however, well formed in this respect. In a few instances, natives attain to a considerable corpulency. The men have fine broad and deep chests, indicating great bodily strength, and are remarkably erect and upright in their carriage, with much natural grace and dignity of demeanour. The eye is generally large, black, and expressive, with the eye-lashes long.

When met with for the first time in his native wilds there is frequently a fearless intrepidity of manner, an ingenuous openness of look, and a propriety of behaviour about the aboriginal inhabitant of Australia, which makes his appearance peculiarly prepossessing.

In the female the average height is about five feet, or perhaps a little under. The anterior part of the brain is more limited than in the male; the apex of the head is carried further back; the facial angle is more acute; and the extremities are more attenuated. The latter circumstance may probably be accounted for from the fact, that the females have to endure, from a very early age, a great degree of hardship, privation, and ill-treatment. Like most other savages the Australian looks upon his wife as a slave. To her belongs the duty of collecting and preparing the daily food, of making the camp or hut for the night, of gathering and bringing in firewood, and of procuring water. She must also attend to the children; and in travelling carry all the moveable property and frequently the weapons of her husband. In wet weather she attends to all the outside work, whilst her lord and master is snugly seated at the fire. If there is a scarcity of food she has to endure the pangs of hunger, often, perhaps, in addition to ill-treatment or abuse. No wonder, then, that the females, and especially the younger ones, (for it is then they are exposed to the greatest hardships,) are not so fully or so roundly developed in person as the men. Yet under all these disadvantages this deficiency does not always exist. Occasionally, though rarely, I have met with females in the bloom of youth, whose well-proportioned limbs and symmetry of figure might have formed a model for the sculptor's chisel. In personal appearance the females are, except in early youth, very far inferior to the men. When young, however, they are not uninteresting. The jet-black eyes, shaded by their long, dark lashes, and the delicate and scarcely-formed features of incipient womanhood give a soft and pleasing expression to a countenance that might often be called good-looking—occasionally even pretty.

The colour of the skin, both in the male and female, is generally black, or very darkly tinged. The hair is either straight or curly, but never approaching to the woolliness of the negro. It is usually worn short by both sexes, and is variously ornamented at different periods of life. Sometimes it is smeared with red ochre and grease; at other times adorned with tufts of feathers, the tail of the native dog, kangaroo teeth, and bandages or nets of different kinds.

[Note 57: The same fondness for red paint, ornaments of skins, tufts of feathers, etc., is noticed by Catlin as prevalent among the American Indians, and by Dieffenbach as existing among the New Zealanders.]

When the head of the native is washed clean, and purified from the odour of the filthy pigment with which it is bedaubed, the crop of hair is very abundant, and the appearance of it beautiful, being a silken, glossy, and curly black. Great pains are, however, used to destroy or mar this striking ornament of nature.

Without the slightest pride of appearance, so far as neatness or cleanliness is concerned, the natives are yet very vain of their own rude decorations, which are all worn for EFFECT. A few feathers or teeth, a belt or band, a necklace made of the hollow stem of some plant, with a few coarse daubs of red or white paint, and a smearing of grease, complete the toilette of the boudoir or the ball-room. Like the scenery of a panorama, they are then seen to most advantage at a distance; for if approached too closely, they forcibly remind us of the truth of the expression of the poet, that "nature unadorned is adorned the most."

The body dress is simple; consisting of the skins of the opossum, the kangaroo, or the wallabie, when they can be procured. A single garment only is used, made in the form of an oblong cloak, or coverlet; by the skins being stretched out and dried in the sun, and then sewn together with the sinews of the emu, etc. The size of the cloak varies according to the industry of the maker, or the season of the year. The largest sized ones are about six feet square, but the natives frequently content themselves with one not half this size, and in many cases are without it altogether. The cloak is worn with the fur side outwards, and is thrown over the back and left shoulder, and pinned on in front with a little wooden peg; the open part is opposite the right side, so as to leave the right arm and shoulder quite unconfined, in the male; the female throws it over the back and left shoulder, and brings it round under the right arm-pit, and when tied in front by a string passing round the cloak and the back, a pouch is formed behind, in which the child is always carried. [Note 58 at end of para.] In either if the skin be a handsome one, the dress is very pretty and becoming.

[Note 58: A similar custom prevails among the women of the American Indians.—CATLIN. vol. ii. p. 132.]

On the sea coast, where the country is barren, and the skins of animals cannot readily be procured, sea-weed or rushes are manufactured into garments, with considerable ingenuity. In all cases the garments worn by day constitute the only covering at night, as the luxury of variety in dress is not known to, or appreciated by, the Aborigines.

No covering is worn upon the head, although they are continually exposed to the rays of an almost tropical sun. In extreme seasons of heat, and 'when they are travelling, they sometimes gather a few green bunches or wet weeds and place upon their heads; but this does not frequently occur.

The character of the Australian natives is frank, open, and confiding. In a short intercourse they are easily made friends, and when such terms are once established, they associate with strangers with a freedom and fearlessness, that would give little countenance to the impression so generally entertained of their treachery. On many occasions where I have met these wanderers in the wild, far removed from the abodes of civilization, and when I have been accompanied only by a single native boy, I have been received by them in the kindest and most friendly manner, had presents made to me of fish, kangaroo, or fruit, had them accompany me for miles to point out where water was to be procured, and been assisted by them in getting at it, if from the nature of the soil and my own inexperience. I had any difficulty in doing so myself.

I have ever found them of a lively, cheerful disposition [Note 59 at end of para.], patiently putting up with inconveniences and privations, and never losing that natural good temper which so strongly characterizes them. On the occasion of my second visit from Moorunde, to the Rufus natives in 1841, when I had so far overcome the ill-feelings and dread, engendered by the transactions in that quarter, in 1840, as to induce a large body of them to accompany me back to the station, they had to walk a distance of 150 miles, making daily the same stages that the horses did, and unprovided with any food but what they could procure along the road as they passed, and this from the rapidity with which they had to travel, and the distance they had to go in a day, was necessarily limited in quantity, and very far from sufficient to appease even the cravings of hunger, yet tired, foot-sore, and hungry as they were, and in company with strangers, whose countrymen had slain them in scores, but a few months before, they were always merry at their camps at nights, and kept singing, laughing, and joking, to a late hour.

[Note 59: Such appears usually to be the characteristic of Nature's children, than whom no race appears more thoroughly to enjoy life.—Vide character of the American Indians, by Catlin, vol. 1. p. 84.]

On falling in with them in larger numbers, when I have been travelling in the interior with my party, I have still found the same disposition to meet me on terms of amity and kindness. Nor can a more interesting sight well be imagined, than that of a hundred or two hundred natives advancing in line to meet you, unarmed, shouting and waving green boughs in both hands, men, women, and children, the old and the young, all joining in expressing their good feelings and pacific intentions. On such occasions I have been often astonished at the facility with which large bodies, have by a little kindness and forbearance been managed, and kept from being troublesome or annoying, by a party of only six or seven Europeans. I have occasionally had upwards of 150 natives sitting in a long line, where I placed them, and as orderly and obedient almost as a file of soldiers.

At other times, when riding with only a native boy over the plains of the interior, I have seen the blue smoke of the native fires, curling up through the distant line of trees, which marked some yet unvisited watercourse, and upon making towards it, have come suddenly upon a party encamped in the hollow, beneath the banks upon which I stood. Here I have remained, observing them for a few moments, unseen and unthought of. A single call would arouse their attention, and as they looked up, would draw from them a wild exclamation of dismay, accompanied by a look of indescribable horror and affright, at beholding the strange, and to them incomprehensible beings who stood before them. Weapons would hastily be seized, baggage gathered up, and the party so lately buried in repose and security, would at once be ready either to fight or to evacuate their camps, as circumstances might seem to render most expedient. A few friendly gestures and a peaceable demeanour would however soon dissipate their terror, and in a few moments their weapons would be thrown aside, and both invaders and invaded be upon intimate and confiding terms.

I have always found the natives ready to barter their nets, weapons, or other implements, for European articles, and sometimes they will give them unsolicited, and without any equivalent; amongst themselves they constantly do this.

In their intercourse with each other, natives of different tribes are exceedingly punctilious and polite, the most endearing epithets are passed between those who never met before; almost every thing that is said is prefaced by the appellation of father, son, brother, mother, sister, or some other similar term, corresponding to that degree of relationship which would have been most in accordance with their relative ages and circumstances. In many instances, too, these titles are even accompanied by the still more insinuating addition of "dear," to say nothing of the hugs and embraces which they mutually give and receive.

The natives are very fond of the children they rear, and often play with, and fondle them; but husbands rarely shew much affection for their wives. After a long absence, I have seen natives, upon their return, go to their camp, exhibiting the most stoical indifference, never take the least notice of their wives, but sit down, and act, and look, as if they had never been out of the encampment; in fact, if any thing, they are more taciturn and reserved than usual, and some little time elapses before they enter into conversation with freedom, or in their ordinary manner.

[Note 60: For the existence of similar customs amongst the American Indians, vide Catlin, vol. i. p. 56.]

Upon meeting children after a long absence, I have seen parents “fall upon their necks, and weep” bitterly. It is a mistaken idea, as well as an unjust one, that supposes the natives to be without sensibility of feeling. It may often be repressed from pride or policy, but it will sometimes break forth uncontrolled, and reveal, that the best and genuine feelings of the heart are participated in by savage in common with civilized man. The following is an instance in point:—A fine intelligent young boy, was, by his father’s consent, living with me at the Murray for many weeks; but upon the old man’s going into Adelaide, he took his son away to accompany him. Whilst there, the boy died, and for nearly a year I never saw any thing more of the father, although he occasionally had been within a few miles of my neighbourhood. One day, however, I was out shooting about three miles from home, and accidentally fell in with him. Upon seeing me he immediately burst into tears, and was unable to speak. It was the first time he had met me since his son’s death, and my presence forcibly reminded him of his loss. The same circumstance occurred when he accompanied me to the house, where every thing he saw recalled the memory of his child.

Innate propriety of behaviour is also frequently exhibited by the Aborigines in their natural state, in the modest unassuming manner in which they take their positions to observe what is going on, and in a total absence of any thing that is rude or offensive. It is true that the reverse of this is also often to be met with; but I think it will usually be found that it is among natives who have before been in contact with Europeans, or where familiarities have been used with them first, or an injudicious system of treatment has been adopted towards them.

DELICACY of feeling is not often laid to the charge of the Aborigines, and yet I was witness to a singular instance of it at King George’s Sound. I was looking one evening at the natives dancing, and who were, as they always are on these occasions, in a state of complete nudity. In the midst of the performance, one of the natives standing by a spectator, mentioned that a white woman was passing up the road; and although this was some little distance away, and the night was tolerably dark, they all with one accord crossed over to the bushes where their cloaks were, put them on, and resumed their amusement.

It has been said, and is generally believed, that the natives are not courageous. There could not be a greater mistake, at least as far as they are themselves concerned, nor do I hold it to be any proof that they are cowards, because they dread or give way before Europeans and their fire-arms. So unequal a match is no criterion of bravery, and yet even thus, among natives, who were labouring under the feelings, naturally produced by seeing a race they were unacquainted with, and weapons that dealt death as if by magic, I have seen many instances of an open manly intrepidity of manner and bearing, and a proud unquailing glance of eye, which instinctively stamped upon my mind the conviction that the individuals before me were very brave men.

In travelling about from one place to another, I have always made it a point, if possible, to be accompanied by one or more natives, and I have often found great advantage from it. Attached to an exploring party they are frequently invaluable, as their perceptive powers are very great, and enable them both to see and hear anything at a much greater distance than a

European. In tracking stray animals, and keeping on indistinct paths, they display a degree of perseverance and skill that is really wonderful. They are useful also in cutting bark canoes to cross a river, should such impede the progress of the party, and in diving for anything that may be lost in the water, etc. etc. The Aborigines generally, and almost always those living near large bodies of water, are admirable swimmers and divers, and are almost as much at home in the water as on dry land. I have known them even saw a small log or root at the bottom of a deep river. In a locality, however, which is badly watered, it sometimes happens that they cannot swim. At Meerkap, in Western Australia, while crossing with some friends, from the Sound to Swan River, we met with some who were in this predicament, and who seemed a good deal astonished at our venturing into the small ponds at that place. I have been told that the natives at the Sound could not swim before that settlement was occupied by Europeans—this seems hardly probable, however, upon the sea-coast; at all events, be this as it may, they all swim now.

In habit they are truly nomadic, seldom remaining many weeks in one locality, and frequently not many days. The number travelling together depends, in a great measure, upon the period of the year, and the description of food that may be in season. If there is any particular variety more abundant than another, or procurable only in certain localities, the whole tribe generally congregate to partake of it. Should this not be the case, then they are probably scattered over their district in detached groups, or separate families.

At certain seasons of the year, usually in the spring or summer, when food is most abundant, several tribes meet together in each other's territory for the purpose of festivity or war, or to barter and exchange such food, clothing, implements, weapons, or other commodities as they respectively possess; or to assist in the initiatory ceremonies by which young persons enter into the different grades of distinction amongst them. The manner and formalities of meeting depend upon the cause for which they assemble. If the tribes have been long apart, many deaths may have occurred in the interim; and as the natives do not often admit that the young or the strong can die from natural causes, they ascribe the event to the agency of sorcery, employed by individuals of neighbouring tribes. This must of course be expiated in some way when they meet, but the satisfaction required is regulated by the desire of the injured tribe to preserve amicable relations with the other, or the reverse.

The following is an account of a meeting which I witnessed, between the natives of Moorunde (comprising portions of several of the neighbouring tribes) and the Nar-wij-jerook, or Lake Bonney tribe, accompanied also by many of their friends. This meeting had been pre-arranged, as meetings of large bodies of natives never take place accidentally, for even when a distant tribe approaches the territory of another unexpectedly, messengers are always sent on in advance, to give the necessary warning. The object of the meeting in question was to perform the initiatory ceremonies upon a number of young men belonging to both of the tribes. In the Murray district, when one tribe desires another to come from a distance to perform these ceremonies, young men are sent off with messages of invitation, carrying with them as their credentials, long narrow news, made of string manufactured from the rush. These nets are left with the tribe they are sent to, and brought back again when the invitation is responded to.

Notice having been given on the previous evening to the Moorunde natives of the approach of the Nar-wij-jerook tribe, they assembled at an early hour after sunrise, in as clear and open a place as they could find. Here they sat down in a long row to await the coming of their friends. The men were painted, and carried their weapons, as if for war. The women and children were in detached groups, a little behind them, or on one side, whilst the young men, on whom the ceremonies were to be performed, sat shivering with cold and apprehension in a row to the rear of the men, perfectly naked, smeared over from head to foot with grease and red-ochre, and without weapons. The Nar-wij-jerook tribe was now seen approaching. The men were in a body, armed and painted, and the women and children accompanying them a

little on one side. They occasionally halted, and entered into consultation, and then, slackening their pace, gradually advanced until within a hundred yards of the Moorunde tribe. Here the men came to a full stop, whilst several of the women singled out from the rest, and marched into the space between the two parties, having their heads coated over with lime, and raising a loud and melancholy wail, until they came to a spot about equi-distant from both, when they threw down their cloaks with violence, and the bags which they carried on their backs, and which contained all their worldly effects. The bags were then opened, and pieces of glass and shells taken out, with which they lacerated their thighs, backs, and breasts, in a most frightful manner, whilst the blood kept pouring out of the wounds in streams; and in this plight, continuing their wild and piercing lamentations, they moved up towards the Moorunde tribe, who sat silently and immovably in the place at first occupied. One of the women then went up to a strange native, who was on a visit to the Moorunde tribe and who stood neutral in the affair of the meeting, and by violent language and frantic gesticulations endeavoured to incite him to revenge the death of some relation or friend. But he could not be induced to lift his spear against the people amongst whom he was sojourning. After some time had been spent in mourning, the women took up their bundles again, and retiring, placed themselves in the rear of their own party. An elderly man then advanced, and after a short colloquy with the seated tribe, went back, and beckoned his own people to come forward, which they did slowly and in good order, exhibiting in front three uplifted spears, to which were attached the little nets left with them by the envoys of the opposite tribe, and which were the emblems of the duty they had come to perform, after the ordinary expiations had been accomplished.

In advancing, the Nar-wij-jerooks again commenced the death wail, and one of the men, who had probably sustained the greatest loss since the tribes had last met, occasionally in alternations of anger and sorrow addressed his own people. When near the Moorunde tribe a few words were addressed to them, and they at once rose simultaneously, with a suppressed shout. The opposite party then raised their spears, and closing upon the line of the other tribe, speared about fifteen or sixteen of them in the left arm, a little below the shoulder. This is the generally understood order of revenge; for the persons who were to receive the wounds, as soon as they saw the weapons of their assailants poised, at once put out the left foot, to steady themselves, and presented the left shoulder for the blow, frequently uttering the word "Leipa" (spear), as the others appeared to hesitate.

Whilst this was going on, the influential men of each tribe were violently talking to each other, and apparently accusing one another of being accessory to the death of some of their people. Disclaimers passed on each side, and the blame was imputed to other and more distant tribes. The manes of the dead having been appeased, the honour of each party was left unsullied, and the Nar-wij-jerooks retired about a hundred yards, and sat down, ready to enter upon the ceremonies of the day, which will be described in another place. [Note 61: Chapter V.]

If the meeting of the tribes be for the purpose of war, a favourable situation is selected by one of the parties, and notice is sent to the other, who then proceed to the place of meeting, where both draw out their forces in opposing parallel lines. Day-break, or nearly about sunset in the evening, are the times preferred for these engagements, as the softened light at those hours does not so much affect the eyesight, and the spears are more easily seen and avoided. Both parties are fully armed with spears, shields, and other weapons, and the fight sometimes lasts for three or four hours, during which scarcely a word is spoken, and but little noise of any kind is heard, excepting a shrill cry now and then, when some one is wounded or has a narrow escape. Many are injured generally on both sides, and some severely so; but it rarely happens that more than one or two are killed, though hundreds may have been engaged.

The fights are sometimes witnessed by men who are not concerned in them, by the women and the children. The presence of the females may be supposed probably to inspire the belligerents with courage and incite them to deeds of daring.

The most dangerous and fatal affrays in which the natives engage are those which occur suddenly amongst tribes who have been encamped near one another on amicable terms, and between whom some cause of difference has arisen, probably in relation to their females, or some recent death, which it is imagined the sorcerers have been instrumental in producing. In the former case a kind of melee sometimes takes place at night, when fire-brands are thrown about, spears launched, and bwirris [Note 62 at end of para.] bran-dished in indescribable confusion. In the latter case the affray usually occurs immediately after the body is buried, and is more of a hand-to-hand fight, in which bwirris are used rather than spears, and in which tremendous blows are struck and frightful wounds inflicted.

[Note 62: A short, heavy, wooden stick, with a knob at one end.]

In wars males are always obliged to join their relatives by blood and their own tribe. Women frequently excite the men to engage in these affrays to revenge injuries or deaths, and sometimes they assist themselves by carrying spears or other weapons for their husbands. I am not aware that women or children are ever butchered after a battle is over, and I believe such is never the case. Single camps are sometimes treacherously surprised when the parties are asleep, and the males barbarously killed in cold blood. This generally takes place just before the morning dawns, when the native is most drowsy, and least likely to give his attention to any thing he might hear. In these cases the attack is generally made under the belief that the individual is a desperate sorcerer, and has worked innumerable mischiefs to their tribe. In their attacks upon European parties I believe the natives generally advance in a line or crescent, beating their weapons together, throwing dust in the air, spitting, biting their beards, or using some other similar act of defiance and hostility. I have never witnessed any such collision myself, but am told that the attack is always accompanied by that peculiar savage sound produced by the suppressed guttural shout of many voices in unison, which they use in conflicts amongst themselves, and which is continued to the moment of collision, and renewed in triumph whenever a weapon strikes an opponent.

When hostilely disposed from either fear or from having been previously ill-treated, I have seen the natives, without actually proceeding to extremities, resort to all the symptoms of defiance I have mentioned, or at other times, run about with fire-brands in their hands, lighting the bushes and the grass, either as a charm, or in the hope of burning out the intruders. When much alarmed and rather closely pressed, they have run up the trees like monkeys, and concealed themselves among the boughs, evidently thinking they were secure from pursuit there.

If tribes meet simply for the purpose of festivity, and have no deaths to avenge on either side, although they appear in warlike attitude, painted and bearing spear and shield, yet when they approach each other, they all become seated upon the ground. After which, the strangers, should there be any, undergo a formal introduction, and have their country and lineage described by the older men. At these meetings all occurrences of interest are narrated, information is given as to the localities in which food is most abundant, and invitations are issued by the proprietors of these districts, to their relations and friends to accompany them thither.

The position of one tribe towards another, whether on friendly terms or otherwise, is talked about, and consultations are held on the existing state of affairs, whether hostilities shall be continued or withdrawn, and future plans of operation are marked out.

Whilst the men are occupied in discussing these matters, the females engage in a narration of family occurrences, such as births of children, marriages, deaths, etc., not omitting a sprinkling of gossip and scandal, from which, even these ebon sisters of a fairer race, are not altogether exempt.

In the evening, the huts of the different tribes are built as near to each other as practicable, each tribe locating itself in the direction from whence it came. The size and character of the huts, with the number of their occupants, vary according to the state of the weather, and the local circumstances of their position. In fine weather, one hut will contain from two to five families, in wet weather more, each family however having a separate fire.

The amusements of the natives are various, but they generally have a reference to their future occupations or pursuits. Boys who are very young, have small reed spears made for them by their parents, the ends of which are padded with grass, to prevent them from hurting each other. They then stand at a little distance, and engage in a mimic fight; and by this means acquire early that skill in the use of this weapon, for which, in after life, they are so much celebrated. At other times round pieces of bark are rolled along the ground, to represent an animal in the act of running, at which the spears are thrown for the sake of practice.

Another favourite amusement among the children, is to practise the dances and songs of the adults, and a boy is very proud if he attains sufficient skill in these, to be allowed to take part in the exhibitions that are made before other tribes.

String puzzles are another species of amusement with them. In these a European would be surprised to see the ingenuity they display, and the varied and singular figures which they produce. Our juvenile attempts in this way, are very meagre and uninteresting compared to them. [Note 63: An amusement of the New Zealand children.—Dieffenbach, vol. 2. p. 32.] Other gratifications enjoyed by children, consist in learning the occupations and pursuits of after life, as to make twine, and weapons; to ascend trees; to procure food; to guide the canoe, and many other things, which enter into the pursuits of a savage.

The elder boys engage more extensively in similar occupations, as they are more particularly interested in them, and by their exertions have to provide chiefly for their own support. Mock combats frequently take place amongst them, in which they are encouraged by the adults, that they may acquire the dexterities of warfare, in which they are soon to be more seriously engaged. [Note 64: For an account of a similar practise among the American Indians, vide Catlin, vol. 1. p. 131.]

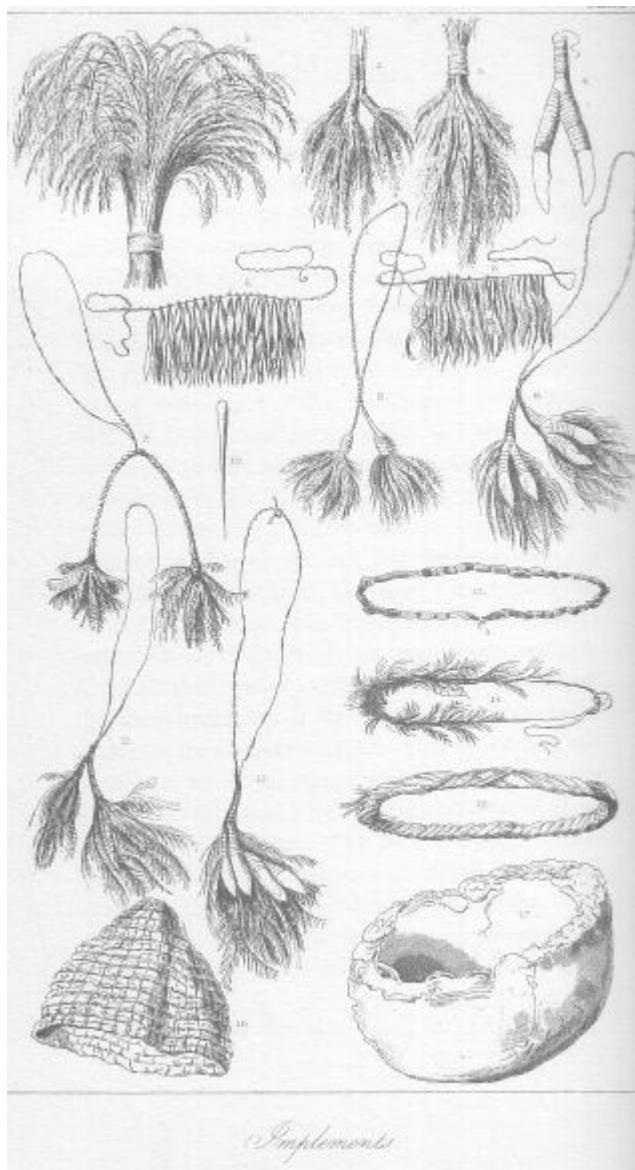


Plate I.—Native Ornaments

An amusement of the adults, is a large bunch of emu feathers tied together, (fig. 1. Pl. 1.) which is held out and shaken as if in defiance, by some individual, whilst the others advance to try to take it out of his hands. This occasions an amusing struggle before the prize is gained, in which it is not uncommon to see from ten to twenty strong and lusty men rolling in a heap together. This is a sort of athletic exercise amongst them, for the purpose of testing each other's strength. On such an occasion they are all unarmed and naked.

At nights, dances or plays are performed by the different tribes in turn, the figures and scenes of which are extensively varied, but all are accompanied by songs, and a rude kind of music produced by beating two sticks together, or by the action of the hand upon a cloak of skins rolled tightly together, so as to imitate the sound of a drum. In some of the dances only are the women allowed to take a part; but they have dances of their own, in which the men do not join. At all times they are the chief musicians, vocal and instrumental. Sometimes, however, they have an old man to lead the band and pitch the tunes; and at others they are assisted by the old and young men indiscriminately.

The natives have not any war-dance, properly so called, though sometimes they are decorated in all the pomp and circumstance of war. Being excellent mimics, they imitate in many of their dances the habits and movements of animals. They also represent the mode of hunting, fighting, love-making, etc. New figures and new songs are constantly introduced, and are as much applauded and encored, as more refined productions of a similar kind in civilized communities; being sometimes passed from tribe to tribe for a considerable distance. I have often seen dances performed to songs with which I was acquainted, and which I knew to belong to distant parts of the country where a different dialect was spoken, and which consequently could not be understood where I heard them. Many of the natives cannot even give an interpretation of the songs of their own districts [Note 65 at end of para.], and most of the explanations they do give are, I am inclined to think, generally very imperfect, as the measures or quantities of the syllables appear to be more attended to than the sense.

[Note 65: "Not one in ten of the young men who are dancing and singing it, know the meaning of the song they are chaunting over."—Catlin, vol. 1. p. 126. Also the case in New Zealand, with respect to some of the songs.—Vide Dieffenbach, vol. 2. p. 57.]

Of these amusements the natives are passionately fond; and when once they have so far overcome their naturally indolent disposition as to be induced to engage in them there is no knowing when they will give over. Dances are sometimes held during the day, but these are of rare occurrence, and seem to be in some way connected with their ceremonial observances or superstitions, since rude figures, and lofty branches of trees, decorated with tufts of feathers, emu plumes, swan's down and red ochre, occupy a prominent part in the exhibition, although never met with in the dances by night.

The dances vary a great deal among the different tribes, both as to figures and music; the painting or decoration of their persons, their use of weapons, and the participation of the females in them. Throughout the entire continent, as far as it is known, there are many points of resemblance in the dances of all the Aborigines, such as the practice of painting the body with white and red ochre, carrying boughs in their hands, or tying them round their limbs; adorning the head with feathers or down, bearing bunches of feathers, tied in tufts in their hands, the women singing and beating time upon folded skins, the men beating time upon sticks or some of their smaller weapons, an old man acting as leader of the band, and giving the time and tune to the others; the dances representing the actions of animals, the circumstances of the chase, of war, or of love; and the singular and extraordinary quivering motion of the thighs when the legs are distended, a peculiarity probably confined to the natives of the continent of Australia.

The most interesting dances are those which take place at the meeting of different tribes. Each tribe performs in turn, and as there is much rivalry, there is a corresponding stimulus to exertion. The dances usually commence an hour or two after dark, and are frequently kept up the greater part of the night, the performers becoming so much excited that, notwithstanding the violent exercise required to sustain all their evolutions, they are unwilling to leave off. It is sometimes difficult to induce them to commence a dance; but if they once begin, and enter into the spirit of it, it is still more difficult to induce them to break up.

The females of the tribe exhibiting, generally sit down in front of the performers, either irregularly, in a line, or a semicircle, folding up their skin cloaks into a hard ball, and then beating them upon their laps with the palm of their hand, and accompanying the noise thus produced with their voices. It is surprising to see the perfect time that is kept in this way, and the admirable manner in which the motions of the dancers accord with the music. There is no confusion, irregularity, or mistake. Each person is conversant with his part; and all exhibit a degree of elasticity and gracefulness in their movements which, in some of the dances, is very striking and beautiful.

In many of the figures, weapons are carried, such as the waddy, the shield, the spear, etc. and in these it is amazing to behold the facility and skill with which they form in close array, spread into open rank, change places, and thread through the mazes of the dance, without ever deranging their plans, or coming in contact with each other.

The tribes who are not engaged in dancing, are seated in a large semicircle as spectators, occasionally giving a rapturous exclamation of delight, as any part of the performance is well gone through or any remarkable feat of activity exhibited. Where natives have not much acquaintance with Europeans, so as to give up, in some measure, their original habits, if there is any degree of jealousy between the respective tribes, they are sometimes partitioned off from each other by boughs of trees, whilst they look at the dance. On one occasion I saw five tribes met together, and the evening was of course spent in dancing. Each tribe danced in turn, about forty being engaged at once, besides sixteen females, eight of whom were at each corner of the male performers. The men were naked, painted in various devices with red and white, and had their heads adorned with feathers. The women wore their opossum cloaks, and had bands of white down round their foreheads, with the long feathers of the cockatoo sticking up in front like horns. In the dance the men and women did not intermingle; but the two sets of women who were dancing at the corners of the line, occasionally changed places with each other, passing in this transit, at the back of the men. All sung, and the men beat time upon their smaller weapons whilst dancing, the whole making up a wild and piercing noise, most deafening and ungrateful to the ears.

The natives of the Rufus and Lake Victoria (Tar-ru) have a great variety of dances and figures. One of these, which I witnessed, representing the character, habits, and chase of the kangaroo was admirably performed, and would have drawn down thunders of applause at any theatre in Europe. One part of this figure, where the whole of the dancers successively drop down from a standing to a crouching posture, and then hop off in this position with outstretched arms and legs, was excellently executed. The contrast of their sable skins with the broad white stripes painted down their legs; their peculiar attitudes, and the order and regularity with which these were kept, as they moved in a large semicircle, in the softening light of the fire, produced a striking effect; and in connection with the wild and inspiriting song, which gave an impulse to their gesticulation, led me almost to believe that the scene was unearthly.



Kangaroo Dance of King George's Sound, J. Neill

In some of the dances the music varies rapidly from slow to quick, and the movements alter accordingly. In some they are altogether measured and monotonous, in others very lively and quick, keeping the performers almost constantly at a double quick march, moving in advance and retreat, crossing past or threading through the ranks, and using a kind of motion with the feet in unison with the music, that bears a strong resemblance to the European mode of dancing. At particular points the figures terminate by some simultaneous motion of the whole performers, accompanied by a deep, gutteral "Waugh," [Note 66 at end of para.] uttered by all together; at others by the actors closing in a dense circle, and raising and pointing their weapons upwards with the same exclamation.

[Note 66: This very peculiar sound appears to be common among the American Indians, and to be used in a similar manner.—Vide Catlin, vol. 2. p.136.]

The "Paritke," or natives inhabiting the scrub north-west of Moorunde, have quite a different form of dancing from the river natives. They are painted or decorated with feathers in a similar way; but each dancer ties bunches of green boughs round the leg, above the knees, whilst the mode of dancing consists in stamping with the foot and uttering at each motion a deep ventral intonation, the boughs round the knees making a loud rustling noise in keeping with the time of the music. One person, who directs the others in the movements of this dance, holds in his hands an instrument in the form of a diamond, made of two slight sticks, from two and a half to three feet long, crossed and tied in the middle, round this a string, made of the hair of the opossum, is pressed from corner to corner, and continued successively towards the centre until there is only room left for the hand to hold the instrument. At each corner is appended a bunch of cockatoo feathers. With this the chief performer keeps a little in advance of the dancers, and whisking it up and down to the time of the music, regulates their movements.

In another dance, in which women are the chief performers, their bodies are painted with white streaks, and their hair adorned with cockatoo feathers. They carry large sticks in their hands, and place themselves in a row in front, whilst the men with their spears stand in a line behind them. They then all commence their movements, but without intermingling, the males and females dancing by themselves. There is little variety or life in this dance, yet it seems to be a favourite one with the natives.

The women have occasionally another mode of dancing, by joining the hands together over the head, closing the feet, and bringing the knees into contact. The legs are then thrown outwards from the knee, whilst the feet and hands are kept in their original position, and being drawn quickly in again a sharp sound is produced by the collision. This is either practised alone by young girls, or by several together for their own amusement. It is adopted also when a single woman is placed in front of a row of male dancers to excite their passions; for many of the native dances are of a grossly licentious character. In another figure they keep the feet close together, without lifting them from the ground, and by a peculiar motion of the limbs advance onwards, describing a short semicircle. This amusement is almost exclusively confined to young females among themselves.

It has already been remarked, that the natives, on particular occasions, have dances which they perform in the day-time, which are different from others, and seem to have some connection with their ceremonial observances or superstitions. I have only witnessed one of these. It took place at Moorunde, in March 1844, on the occasion of a large number of distant natives coming to visit the place; and the visitors were the performers. The Moorunde natives were seated upon the brow of a sand-bank; the strangers, consisting of two tribes, down in a hollow a little way off, among a few bushes. When ready, they advanced in a line towards the others, dancing and singing, being painted and decorated as usual, some having tufts of feathers placed upon their heads like cockades and others carrying them in their hands tied to short sticks. Nearly all the males carried bunches of green boughs, which they waved and

shook to the time of the song. The women were also painted, and danced in a line with the men, those of each tribe stationing themselves at opposite ends of the line. Dancing for a while, they retired again towards the hollow, and after a short interval advanced as before, but with a person in the centre carrying a curious, rude-looking figure, raised up in the air. This singular object consisted of a large bundle of grass and reeds bound together, enveloped in a kangaroo skin, with the flesh side outwards, and painted all over in small white circles. From the top of this projected a thin stick, with a large tuft of feathers at the end to represent the head, and sticks were stuck out laterally from the sides for the arms, terminating in tufts of feathers stained red to represent the hands. From the front, a small stick about six inches long was projected, ending with a thick knob, formed of grass, around which a piece of old cloth was tied. This was painted white and represented the navel. The figure was about eight feet long, and was evidently intended to symbolise a man. It was kept in its elevated position by the person who carried it, and who advanced and retired with the movements of the dancers. The position of the latter was alternately erect and crouching, whilst they sang and beat time with the green boughs. Sometimes they stretched out their right arms simultaneously, and at other times their left, apparently for the purpose of marking the time at particular parts of the song. After dancing for a while in this way, they again retired to the hollow, and for a few moments there was another pause; after which they again advanced as before, but without the image. In the place of this two standards were exhibited, made of poles, about twelve feet long, and borne by two persons. These were perfectly straight, and for the first eight feet free from boughs; above this nine branches were left upon each pole, having at their ends each a bunch of feathers of the hawk or owl. On the top of one of the standards was a bunch of emu feathers. The branches were stripped of all their smaller twigs and leaves, and of their bark. They were painted white, and wound round with the white down of the black swan, twisted into a rope. This also extended for a considerable distance down the pole, below the undermost branch.



Woodcut of a Standard used in the Dances performed by day

Having again retired towards the hollow, they remained there for a few minutes, and then advanced for the third time. On this occasion, however, instead of the image or standards, they all carried their spears. After dancing with these for some time, they went forward towards the Moorunde natives, who sprang upon their feet, and seizing their weapons, speared two or three of the strangers in the shoulder, and all was over. I was anxious to have got hold of the rude figure to have a drawing made of it, but it had been instantly destroyed. The standards I procured.

This dance took place between nine and ten in the morning, and was quite unlike any thing I had seen before. A stranger might have supposed it to be a religious ceremony, and the image the object of worship. Such, however, I am convinced was not the case, although I believe it to have had some connection with their superstitions, and that it was regarded in the light of a charm.

Before the country was occupied by Europeans, the natives say that this dance was frequently celebrated, but that latterly it has not been much in use. No other instance of it ever came under my own observation in any part of New Holland.

The songs of the natives are of a very rude and unmeaning character, rarely consisting of more than one or two ideas, which are continually repeated over and over again. They are chiefly made on the spur of the moment, and refer to something that has struck the attention at the time. The measure of the song varies according to circumstances. It is gay and lively, for the dance; slow and solemn for the enchanter; and wild and pathetic for the mourner. The music is sometimes not unharmonious; and when heard in the stillness of the night and mellowed by distance, is often soothing and pleasing. I have frequently laid awake, after retiring to rest, to listen to it. Europeans, their property, presence, and habits, are frequently the subject of these songs; and as the natives possess great powers of mimicry, and are acute in the observation of anything that appears to them absurd or ludicrous, the white man often becomes the object of their jests or quizzing. I have heard songs of this kind sung at the dances in a kind of comic medley, where different speakers take up parts during the breaks in the song, and where a sentence or two of English is aptly introduced, or a quotation made from some native dialect, other than that of the performers. It is usually conducted in the form of question and answer, and the respective speakers use the language of the persons they are supposed to represent. The chorus is, however, still the same repetition of one or two words. The following specimens, taken from a vocabulary published by Messrs. Teichelmann, and Schurmann, German Missionaries to the Aborigines, will give an idea of the nature of the songs of the Adelaide tribe.

KADLITPIKO PALTI. Pindi mai birkibirki parrato, parrato. (DE CAPO BIS.)

CAPTAIN JACK'S SONG. The European food, the pease, I wished to eat, I wished to eat.

MULLAWIRRABURKARNA PALTI. Natta ngai padlo ngaityarniappi; watteyernaurlo tappandi ngaityo parni tatti. (DA CAPO.)

KING JOHN'S SONG. Now it (viz. the road or track) has tired me; throughout Yerna there is here unto me a continuous road.

WILTONGARROLO kundando Strike (him, viz. the dog) with the tuft of eagle feathers.

Kadlottikurrelo paltando Strike (him) with the girdle

Mangakurrelo paltando Strike (him) with the string round the head

Worrikarrolo paltando Strike (him) with the blood of circumcision

Turtikarrolo paltando Strike (him) with the blood of the arm. etc. etc.

Kartipaltapaltarlo padlara kundando

Wodliparrele kadlondo

Kanyamirarlo kadlondo

Karkopurrelo kadlondo

“This curse or imprecation is used in hunting a wild dog, which, by the mysterious effects of those words, is induced to lie down securely to sleep, when the natives steal upon and easily kill him. The first word in each line denotes things sacred or secret, which the females and children are never allowed to see.

* * *

KAWEMUKKA minnurappindo Durtikarro minnurappindo

Tarralye minnurappindo Wimmari minnurappindi

Kirki minurappindo Wattetarpirri minnurappindo

Worrikarro minurappindo

“These sentences are used in hunting opossums, to prevent their escape, when the natives set fire to hollow trees in which the opossums are living.

* * *

KARRO karro wimmari Karra yernka makkitia

Karro karro kauwemukka Makkitia mulyeria

Karro karro makkitia

“These words are rapidly repeated to the NGULTAS, while undergoing the painful operation of tattooing; they are believed to be so powerful as to soothe the pain, and prevent fatal consequences of that barbarous operation.”

Another specimen may be given from the Vocabulary published by Mr. Meyer, another of the German Missionaries at Encounter Bay.

“Miny-el-ity yarluke an-ambe what is it road me for Aly-..el-..arr’ yerk-in yangaiak-ar!
here are they standing up hill s

What a fine road is this for me winding between the hills!

“The above words compose one of the native songs. It refers to the road between Encounter Bay and Willunga. All their songs appear to be of the same description, consisting of a few words which are continually repeated. This specimen, it will be observed, consists of two regular verses:

-u|—|u—|u—u —u|—|u—|u—u

“This may, however, be accidental.”

I have not thought it worth while to give any specimens of the songs I have collected myself, because I could not be quite certain that I should give the original words with strict accuracy, neither could I be satisfied about the translations.

The assemblage of several tribes at one place for any of the objects I have described, rarely continues uninterrupted for any great length of time, for even where it has taken place for the most pacific purposes, it seldom terminates as it began; and the greater the number of natives present, the less likelihood is there that they will remain very long in a state of quiescence.

If not soon compelled to separate by the scarcity of food, or a desire to follow some favourite pursuit, for which the season of the year is favourable, they are generally driven to it by discord and disagreements amongst themselves, which their habits and superstitions are calculated to foment.

Chapter III.

FOOD—HOW PROCURED—HOW PREPARED—LIMITATION AS TO AGE, ETC., ETC.

The food of the Aborigines of Australia embraces an endless variety of articles, derived both from the animal and vegetable kingdom. The different kinds in use depend in a great measure upon the season of the year and local circumstances. Every district has in it something peculiar to itself. The soil and climate of the continent vary greatly in their character and afford a corresponding variety of productions to the Aborigines. As far as it is yet known there are no localities on its coast, no recesses in its interior, however sterile and inhospitable they may appear to the traveller, that do not hold out some inducements to the bordering savage to visit them, or at proper seasons of the year provide him with the means of sustenance. Captain Grey remarks, in volume 2, of his travels, page 261—

“Generally speaking, the natives live well; in some districts there may at particular seasons of the year be a deficiency of food, but if such is the case, these tracts are, at those times, deserted. It is, however, utterly impossible for a traveller or even for a strange native to judge whether a district affords an abundance of food, or the contrary; for in traversing extensive parts of Australia, I have found the sorts of food vary from latitude to latitude, so that the vegetable productions used by the Aborigines in one are totally different to those in another; if, therefore, a stranger has no one to point out to him the vegetable productions, the soil beneath his feet may teem with food, whilst he starves. The same rule holds good with regard to animal productions; for example, in the southern parts of the continent the Xanthorrhœa affords an inexhaustible supply of fragrant grubs, which an epicure would delight in, when once he has so far conquered his prejudices as to taste them; whilst in proceeding to the northward, these trees decline in health and growth, until about the parallel of Gantheaume Bay they totally disappear, and even a native finds himself cut off from his ordinary supplies of insects; the same circumstances taking place with regard to the roots and other kinds of food at the same time, the traveller necessarily finds himself reduced to cruel extremities. A native from the plains, taken into an elevated mountainous district near his own country, for the first time, is equally at fault.

“But in his own district a native is very differently situated; he knows exactly what it produces, the proper time at which the several articles are in season, and the readiest means of procuring them. According to these circumstances he regulates his visits to the different portions of his hunting ground; and I can only state that I have always found the greatest abundance in their huts.”

It is evident therefore that a European or even a stranger native would perish in a district capable of supplying the necessaries of life, simply because he had not the experience necessary to direct him where to search for food, or judgment to inform him what article might be in season at the particular time of his visit. It is equally the same with respect to procuring water. The native inhabiting a scrubby and an arid district has, from his knowledge of the country and from a long residence and practical experience in the desert, many resources at command to supply his wants, where the white man would faint or perish from thirst.

The very densest brushes, which to the latter are so formidable and forbidding, hold out to the former advantages and inducements to resort to them of more than ordinary temptation. Abounding in wild animals of various kinds, they offer to the natives who frequent them an unlimited supply of food: a facility for obtaining firewood, a grateful shade from the heat, an effectual screen from the cold, and it has already been shewn that they afford the means of satisfying their thirst by a process but little known, and which from a difference in habits and temperament would be but little available to the European.[Note 67 at end of para.] In

judging, therefore, of the character of any country, from the mere fact of natives being seen there, or even of their being numerous, we must take all these circumstances into consideration; and, in estimating the facility with which a native can remain for a long time in a country, apparently arid and inhospitable, we must not omit to take into account his education and experience, and the general nature of his habits. The two former have accustomed him from infancy to feel at home and at ease, where a European sees only dread and danger: he has thus the advantage over the European in the desert, that a swimmer has in the water over the man who cannot swim; conscious of his own powers and resources, he feels not the least apprehension, whilst the very terrors of the other but augment his danger. On the other hand, the general habits, mode of life, and almost temperament of the savage, give him an equally great advantage. Indolent by disposition and indulgence, he makes very short stages in his ordinary travels, rarely moving more than from eight to twelve miles in the day, and this he does so leisurely and quietly, that he neither becomes excited nor heated, and consequently does not experience that excessive thirst, which is produced by the active exertions or violent exercise of the European, and which in the latter is at the same time so greatly augmented, by his want of confidence and anxiety.

[Note 67: Vide vol. I. p.349 (March 26.)]

Another very great advantage on the part of the natives is, the intimate knowledge they have of every nook and corner of the country they inhabit; does a shower of rain fall, they know the very rock where a little water is most likely to be collected, the very hole where it is the longest retained, and by repairing straight to the place they fill their skins, and thus obtain a supply that lasts them many days. Are there heavy dews at night, they know where the longest grass grows, from which they may collect the spangles, and water is sometimes procured thus in very great abundance. [Note 68 at end of para.] Should there be neither rains nor dews, their experience at once points out to them the lowest levels where the gumscrub grows, and where they are sure of getting water from its roots, with the least possible amount of labour that the method admits of, and with the surest prospect of success.

[Note 69: Vide vol. I. p.349 (March 27.)]

[Note 68: Vide vol. I. p.361 (March 30.)]

Another very important circumstance in favour of the native, and one which results in a measure from some of the above-mentioned considerations, is the fact, that the native sets to work to procure his supply calmly and collectedly, and before he requires it; whilst the European, even if acquainted with the method of obtaining it, would not resort to it until the last extremity, when the body was fatigued and heated by previous exertion, the mouth dry and parched by thirst, and the mind excited and anxious from apprehension. The natural consequence of such a very different combination of circumstances would be, that the native would obtain an abundant and satisfying supply, whilst the European would never be able to procure a sufficiency to appease his thirst, but would rather fatigue and exhaust his strength the more, from his want of skill and experience, and from his body and mind being both in an unfit state for this particular kind of exertion. Such at least, on many various occasions, I have found to be the case both with myself, and with natives with me who have not been accustomed to the scrub, or to this method of procuring water. The difficulty and labour of finding and digging out the roots, our want of skill in selecting proper ones, the great dust arising from the loose, powdery soil in which they were, and our own previously excited and exhausted state, have invariably prevented us from deriving the full advantage we expected from our efforts.

In cases of extreme thirst, where the throat is dry and parched, or life at all in danger, the toil of digging for the roots would be well repaid by the relief afforded. I have myself, in such cases, found that though I could by no means satiate my thirst, I could always succeed in

keeping my mouth cool and moist, and so far in rendering myself equal to exertions I could not otherwise have made. Indeed, I hold it impossible that a person, acquainted with this means of procuring water, and in a district where the gum-scrub grew, could ever perish from thirst in any moderate lapse of time, if he had with him food to eat, and was not physically incapable of exertion. Under such circumstances, the moisture he would be able to procure from the roots, would, I think, be quite sufficient to enable him to eat his food, and to sustain his strength for a considerable time, under such short stages as would gradually conduct him free from his embarrassments.

In addition to the value of the gum-scrub to the native, as a source from whence to obtain his supply of water, it is equally important to him as affording an article of food, when his other resources have failed. To procure this, the lateral roots are still made use of, but the smaller ones generally are selected, such as vary in diameter from an inch downwards. The roots being dug up, the bark is peeled off and roasted crisp in hot ashes; it is then pounded between two stones, and has a pleasant farinaceous taste, strongly resembling that of malt. I have often seen the natives eating this, and have frequently eaten it myself in small quantities. How far it alone would support life, or sustain a man in strength, I have of course no means of forming an opinion; but it is, probably, only resorted to when other food is scarce. Several of the roots of other shrubs are also used for food, and some of them are mucilaginous and very palatable. Throughout the greater portion of New Holland, where there do not happen to be European settlers, and invariably where fresh water can be permanently procured upon the surface, the native experiences no difficulty whatever in procuring food in abundance all the year round. It is true that the character of his diet varies with the changing seasons, and the formation of the country he inhabits; but it rarely happens that any season of the year, or any description of country does not yield him both animal and vegetable food. Amongst the almost unlimited catalogue of edible articles used by the natives of Australia, the following may be classed as the chief:—all salt and fresh-water fish and shell-fish, of which, in the larger rivers, there are vast numbers and many species; freshwater turtle; frogs of different kinds; rats and mice; lizards, and most kinds of snakes and reptiles; grubs of all kinds; moths of several varieties; fungi, and many sorts of roots; the leaves and tops of a variety of plants; the leaf and fruit of the mesembryanthemum; various kinds of fruits and berries; the bark from the roots of many trees and shrubs; the seeds of leguminous plants; gum from several species of acacia; different sorts of manna; honey from the native bee, and also from the flowers of the Banksia, by soaking them in water; the tender leaves of the grass-tree; the larvae of insects; white ants; eggs of birds; turtles or lizards; many kinds of kangaroo; opossums; squirrels, sloths, and wallabies; ducks; geese; teal; cockatoos; parrots; wild dogs and wombats; the native companion; the wild turkey; the swan; the pelican; the leipoa, and an endless variety of water-fowl, and other descriptions of birds.

Of these articles, many are not only procurable in abundance, but in such vast quantities at the proper seasons, as to afford for a considerable length of time an ample means of subsistence to many hundreds of natives congregated in one place; and these are generally the kinds of food of which the natives are particularly fond. On many parts of the coast, and in the larger inland rivers, fish are obtained of a very fine description, and in great abundance. At Lake Victoria, which is filled with the back waters of the Murray, I have seen six hundred natives encamped together, all of whom were living at the time upon fish procured from the lake, with the addition, perhaps, of the leaves of the mesembryanthemum. When I went amongst them I never perceived any scarcity in their camps. The fish were caught in nets.

At Moorunde, when the Murray annually inundates the flats, fresh-water cray-fish make their way to the surface of the ground from holes where they have been buried during the year, in such vast numbers that I have seen four hundred natives live upon them for weeks together, whilst the numbers spoiled or thrown away would have sustained four hundred more. This fish is an excellent and nutritious article of food, and would be highly prized by the epicure. It is caught by the women who wade into the water in a long close line, stooping down and

walking backwards, whilst they grope with their hands and feet, presenting a singular, and to the uninitiated, an incomprehensible spectacle, as they thus move slowly backwards, but keep the line regular and well preserved, as all generally occupy the same position at one time. When a cray-fish is caught the large claws are torn off to prevent the animal from biting, and both claws and body are put into a small net suspended from the neck for that purpose. In two or three hours a woman will procure as many fish as will last her family for a day. The men are too lazy to do anything when food is so abundant, and lie basking under the trees in luxurious indolence, whilst their wives, mothers, or sisters are engaged in cooking for them.

An unlimited supply of fish is also procurable at the Murray about the beginning of December, when the floods, having attained their greatest height, begin again to recede; and when the waters, which had been thrown by the back water channels of the river into the flats behind its banks, begin again to reflow through them into the river as it falls in height. At this time the natives repair to these channels, and making a weir across them with stakes and grass interwoven, leave only one or two small openings for the stream to pass through. To these they attach bag nets, which receive all the fish that attempt to re-enter the river. The number procured in this way in a few hours is incredible. Large bodies of natives depend upon these weirs for their sole subsistence, for some time after the waters have commenced to recede.

Another very favourite article of food, and equally abundant at a particular season of the year, in the eastern portion of the continent, is a species of moth which the natives procure from the cavities and hollows of the mountains in certain localities. This, when roasted, has something of the appearance and flavour of an almond badly peeled. It is called in the dialect of the district, where I met with it, Boogouon. The natives are never so well conditioned in that part of the country, as at the season of the year when they return from feasting upon this moth; and their dogs partake equally of the general improvement.

The tops, leaves, and stalks of a kind of cress, gathered at the proper season of the year, tied up in bunches, and afterwards steamed in an oven, furnish a favourite, and inexhaustible supply of food for an unlimited number of natives. When prepared, this food has a savoury and an agreeable smell, and in taste is not unlike a boiled cabbage. In some of its varieties it is in season for a great length of time, and is procured in the flats of rivers, on the borders of lagoons, at the Murray, and in many other parts of New Holland.

There are many other articles of food among the natives, equally abundant and valuable as those I have enumerated: such as various kinds of berries, or fruits, the bulbous roots of a reed called the belillah, certain kinds of fungi dug out of the ground, fresh-water muscles, and roots of several kinds, etc. Indeed, were I to go through the list of articles seriatim, and enter upon the varieties and subdivisions of each class, with the seasons of the year at which they were procurable, it would at once be apparent that the natives of Australia, in their natural state, are not subject to much inconvenience for want of the necessities of life. In almost every part of the continent which I have visited, where the presence of Europeans, or their stock, has not limited, or destroyed their original means of subsistence, I have found that the natives could usually, in three or four hours, procure as much food as would last for the day, and that without fatigue or labour. They are not provident in their provision for the future, but a sufficiency of food is commonly laid by at the camp for the morning meal. In travelling, they sometimes husband, with great care and abstinence, the stock they have prepared for the journey; and though both fatigued and hungry, they will eat sparingly, and share their morsel with their friends, without encroaching too much upon their store, until some reasonable prospect appears of getting it replenished.

In wet weather the natives suffer the most, as they are then indisposed to leave their camps to look for food, and experience the inconveniences both of cold and hunger. If food, at all tainted, is offered to a native by Europeans, it is generally rejected with disgust. In their natural state, however, they frequently eat either fish or animals almost in a state of putridity.

Cannibalism is not common, though there is reason to believe, that it is occasionally practised by some tribes, but under what circumstances it is difficult to say. Native sorcerers are said to acquire their magic influence by eating human flesh, but this is only done once in a life-time.

[Note 70: The only authentic and detailed account of any instance of cannibalism, that I am acquainted with, is found in Parliamentary Papers on Australian Aborigines, published August, 1844, in a report of Mr. Protector Sievewright, from Lake Tarong, in one of the Port Phillip districts.

“On going out I found the whole of the men of the different tribes (amounting to upwards of 100) engaged hand to hand in one general melee.

“On being directed by some of the women, who had likewise sought shelter near my tent, to the huts of the Bolaghers, I there found a young woman, supported in the arms of some of her tribe, quite insensible, and bleeding from two severe wounds upon the right side of the face; she continued in the same state of insensibility till about 11 o’clock, when she expired.

“After fighting for nearly an hour, the men of the Bolagher tribe returned to their huts, when finding that every means I had used to restore the young woman was in vain, they gave vent to the most frantic expressions of grief and rage, and were employed till daylight in preparing themselves and weapons to renew the combat.

“Shortly before sunrise they again rushed towards the Targurt and Elengermite tribes, who, with about a dozen of Wamambool natives, were encamped together, when a most severe struggle took place between them, and very few escaped on either side without serious fractures or dangerous spear wounds. Although the Targurt tribe were supported by the Elengermite and Wamambool natives, and were consequently much superior in number, they were, after two hours hard fighting, driven off the ground and pursued for about four miles, to where their women and children had retired; when one of the former, named Mootinewhannong, was selected, and fell, pierced by about 20 spears of the pursuers.

“The body of this female was shortly afterwards burned to ashes by her own people, and the Bolagher natives returned to their encampment, apparently satisfied with the revenge they had taken, and remained silently and sullenly watching the almost inanimate body of the wounded female.

“When death took place, they again expressed the most violent and extravagant grief; they threw themselves upon the ground, weeping and screaming at the height of their voices, lacerating their bodies and inflicting upon themselves wounds upon their heads, from blows which they gave themselves with the leangville. About an hour after the death of the young woman, the body was removed a few hundred yards into the bush by the father and brother of the deceased; the remainder of the tribe following by one at a time, until they had all joined what I imagined to be the usual funeral party. Having accompanied the body when it was removed, I was then requested to return to my tent, which request I took no notice of. In a few minutes I was again desired, rather sternly, and by impatient signs to go. I endeavoured to make them understand that I wished to remain, and I sat down upon a tree close to where the body lay. The father of the deceased then came close up to me, and pointed with his finger to his mouth, and then to the dead body. I was at this moment closely and intensely scrutinized by the whole party. I at once guessed their meaning, and signified my intention to remain, and, with as much indifference as I could assume, stretched myself upon the tree, and narrowly watched their proceedings.

“With a flint they made an incision upon the breast, when a simultaneous shriek was given by the party, and the same violent signs of grief were again evinced. After a short time the operation was again commenced, and in a few minutes the body disembowelled.

“The scene which now took place was of the most revolting description; horror-stricken and utterly disgusted, while obliged to preserve that equanimity of demeanour upon which I imagined the development of this tragedy to depend, I witnessed the most fearful scene of ferocious cannibalism.

“The bowels and entire viscera having been disengaged from the body, were at first portioned out; but from the impatience of some of the women to get at the liver, a general scramble took place for it, and it was snatched in pieces, and, without the slightest process of cooking, was devoured with an eagerness and avidity, a keen, fiendish expression of impatience for more, from which scene, a memory too tenacious upon this subject will not allow me to escape; the kidneys and heart were in like manner immediately consumed, and as a climax to these revolting orgies, when the whole viscera were removed, a quantity of blood and serum which had collected in the cavity of the chest, was eagerly collected in handfuls, and drunk by the old man who had dissected the body; the flesh was entirely cut off the ribs and back, the arms and legs were wrenched and twisted from the shoulder and hip joints, and their teeth employed to dismember the reeking tendons, when they would not immediately yield to their impatience. The limbs were now doubled up and put aside in their baskets; and on putting a portion of the flesh upon a fire which had previously been lit, they seemed to remember that I was of the party; something was said to one of the women, who cut off a foot from the leg she had in her possession, and offered it to me; I thought it prudent to accept of it, and wrapping it in my handkerchief, and pointing to my tent, they nodded assent, and I joyfully availed myself of their permission to retire. They shortly afterwards returned to their huts with the debris of the feast, and during the day, to the horror and annoyance of my two boys, and those belonging to the establishment, they brought another part, and some half-picked bones, and offered them to us. The head was struck off with a tomahawk and placed between hot stones in the hollow of a tree, where it has undergone a process of baking, and it is still left there otherwise untouched.”]

Many methods of obtaining the various articles of food, are resorted to by the natives, some of these are very simple; some exceedingly ingenious; whilst others require great tact and skill; and not a few exercise to their fullest extent those qualities, which they possess so greatly, and prize so highly, such as quickness of sight, readiness of hand, caution in arranging plans, judgment in directing them, patience in waiting for the result, endurance in pursuing, and strength in holding fast.

Fish are procured in different ways. They are caught with weirs or dams, as already described; and also with large seines made of string manufactured from the rush, and buoyed up with dry reeds, bound into bundles, and weighted by stones tied to the bottom. This is used just in the same way as the European seine, being either shot from a canoe, or set by swimming or wading, according to the depth of the water. Great numbers of fish of various kinds, and often of a large size, are caught in this way. Fresh water turtles, varying in weight from three to twelve pounds, are also taken in the same way, and are excellent eating.

Another kind of net (ngail-le) used in fishing is made of slender twine, and has a large mesh. It is long, but not more than from two to three feet deep. A string is passed through the loops of the upper part, and is then stretched across a lagoon, or any other sheet of still water, the upper part being nearly level with the surface of the water, and the lower part dangling loose below, without weight. In setting it each extremity is fastened to a pole or spear, stuck firmly in the mud to keep it in its place, whilst a third pole is occasionally put in the middle. A few dry reeds are sometimes fastened at intervals to the line, running through the upper part to prevent the net from sinking too low. When set, the native either remains by it to take the fish out as they are caught, or leaves it there all night. The fish swimming about the lagoon, or sporting near the surface, strike against the net, and get their heads fast in the meshes. The net swinging loose, yields to their pressure, and entangles them the more as they struggle to

extricate themselves from it. This is a most destructive mode of catching fish, and generally secures the finest and largest.

Fish are sometimes taken in another way. A party of natives proceed to a lagoon, or lake of still water, each carrying in his hand a small net (ken-de-ran-ko) of a semi-oval shape, about twenty inches long, from seven to nine inches across, and from five to seven inches deep. This net is kept in shape by a thin hoop of wood running round it in the upper part. With this the native dives to the bottom, and searches among the weeds until he sees a fish; he then cautiously places the net under it, and, rising suddenly to the surface, holds his victim at arm's length above his head; and then biting it to kill it, he throws it on the shore and dives down again for another.

The natives are very skilful in this mode of fishing, and it is an interesting sight to see several of them in the water diving together, and exerting themselves against each other in their efforts to catch the best fish, whilst the affrighted inhabitants of the water swim wildly and confusedly about, seeking shelter in the mud and weeds, only to become an easier prey. I have even seen natives dive down in the river, without net or implement of any kind, and bring up good-sized fish, which they had caught with their hands at the bottom.

Another method of diving with the net is conducted on a larger scale. The net itself is made of strong twine, from six to eight feet long, oval at the top, about two feet across, and two deep. It is looped to a wooden hoop or bow, with a strong string drawn tightly across the two ends of the bow, and passed through the loops of the straight side of the net. With this two natives dive together under the cliffs which confine the waters of the Murray, each holding one end of the bow. They then place it before any hole or cavity there may be in the rocks beneath the surface, with the size, shape, and position of which they have by previous experience become well acquainted; the terrified fish is then driven into the net and secured. Fishes varying from twenty to seventy pounds are caught in this way. It is only, however, at particular seasons of the year, when the female fish are seeking for a place to deposit their spawn that this mode of fishing can be adopted.

Other kinds of hoop-nets are used for catching fish in shallow waters, or for taking the shrimp, and a small fish like the white-bait, but they need not be particularly described.

The next principal mode of procuring fish is by spearing them, and even this is performed in a variety of ways, according to the season of the year, the description of fish to be taken, and the peculiarities of the place where they are found. In the shallow waters upon the sea-coast the native wades with his spear and throwing-stick, and follows the windings of the fish with singular rapidity and skill, rarely missing his aim where he has an opportunity of striking.

In the larger rivers, when the waters are low and clear, a party of natives varying in numbers from five to forty plunge in with their spears, which for the purpose are made of hard wood, with smooth, sharp points, and about six feet long. Forming themselves into a large semicircle in the water, they all dive down, simultaneously, with their weapons, accompanied sometimes by a young man, a few yards in advance of the middle of the party, and without a spear. For a considerable time they remain under water, and then, if successful, gradually emerge, and deliver the fish that have been speared, to their friends on the shore. If unsuccessful they swim a few yards further down, and dive again with their weapons. And thus they frequently go on for a mile or two, until they are either tired or satisfied with their success. I have known a party of thirty natives kill seven or eight fish in the course of an hour, none of which were under fifteen pounds, whilst some of them were much larger.

The regularity with which they keep their relative positions, notwithstanding the current of the river, and the dexterity and order with which they dive under the water, are truly surprising to a person who witnesses them for the first time.

At the period of floods, and when they have nearly attained their height, and the young reeds and rushes begin to shew themselves above the surface of the water, near the bank of rivers or of lagoons formed by the floods in the alluvial flats behind, another method of spearing fish is practised from a canoe (mun) made out of a solid sheet of the bark of the gum-tree (eucalyptus).

To these reeds the fish are very fond of resorting, probably to feed upon the insects that are found upon the tender leaves; in moving about from one place to another they strike against the reeds, and produce a vibration in the tops above the water; this indicates to the native, who is sailing stealthily along in his canoe, the exact place where they are passing, and suddenly raising his arm with great energy he strikes forcibly among the reeds with his spear, without letting it go out of his hand. If the first blow does not succeed, it is rapidly repeated, and seldom fails in securing a prize. When a large fish is speared, it is pressed downwards to the ground, and the native leaps out of his canoe and dives to the bottom to secure it. The spear (moo-ar-roo) used in this method of fishing varies from ten to sixteen feet in length, and is made of pine, pliant, and of nearly a uniform thickness; it is about an inch and a half in diameter, and has two short pointed pieces of hard wood lashed to one end, projecting about five or six inches, and set a little apart, so as to form a kind of prongs or grains. This instrument is also used for propelling the canoe.

It is used too for spearing fish by night, which is by far the most interesting method of any.

Having previously prepared his canoe, straightened his spear, and hardened and sharpened the points of the prongs, the native breaks up his fire-wood in small pieces, and loads his canoe with a stock calculated to last the time he intends to be absent. An oval piece of bark, about three feet long and two broad, is then coated over with wet mud and placed in the stern of the canoe, on a framework of sticks. One or two sticks are stuck upright in the mud, and others placed around them in the form of a cone. A fire is then put underneath, and the native, stepping into the bow of his canoe, pushes steadily into the stream, and commences his nocturnal employment. The wood of which the fire is made is of a particular kind, and, as only one description of tree will answer, it has frequently to be brought from a considerable distance. It is obtained among the brush of the table-land stretching behind the valley of the Murray, on either side, and its peculiarities are that it is light, brittle, and resinous, emitting when burning a most agreeable fragrance and a powerful and brilliant light, almost wholly free from smoke.

Two men usually accompany each canoe, one to attend to the fire, and keep it always burning brightly, and the other to guide the canoe and spear the fish. As soon as the fire begins to blaze up the scene becomes most beautiful. The low black looking piece of bark floats noiselessly down the middle of the stream, or stealthily glides under the frowning cliffs, now lit up by a brilliant light. In the bow is seen the dark, naked, but graceful form of the savage, standing firm and erect, and scarcely seeming to move, as with the slightest motion of his arms he guides the frail canoe. His spear is grasped in his hand, whilst his whole attitude and appearance denote the most intense vigilance and attention. Suddenly you see his arm uplifted, and the weapon descending with the rapidity of thought, a splash is seen, a struggle heard, and a fish is slowly and cautiously drawn towards the canoe pierced through with the spear. If it is a large one, the native at once plunges into the water, still retaining his hold of the spear, and soon reappears with the trophy in his arms.

Among the rocks under the cliffs, or among logs or roots of trees, or on a clayey bottom, large fresh-water lobsters (poo-ta-ron-ko) are procured in the same way, weighing from two to four pounds each, and of a most delicate and excellent flavour. I have frequently been out with a single native, and seen him spear from ten to sixteen of these in an hour or two.

It has a singular and powerful effect upon the imagination, to witness at midnight a fleet of these canoes, gliding about in the distance like so many balls of fire, imparting a still deeper shade to the gloom of darkness which surrounds the spectator, and throwing an air of romance on the whole scene. Occasionally in travelling at night, and coming suddenly upon the river from the scrub behind, I have been dazzled and enchanted with the fairy sight that has burst upon me. The waters have been alive with brilliant fires, moving to and fro in every direction, like meteors from a marsh, and like those too, rapidly and inexplicably disappearing when the footsteps of strangers are heard approaching.

A few other methods of catching fish are sometimes resorted to, such as stirring up the mud in stagnant ponds, and taking the fish when they come up almost choked to the surface. Groping with their hands or with boughs, etc. etc.

There is also a particular season of the year (about September), when in the larger rivers the fish become ill or diseased, and lie floating on the surface unable to descend, or drift down dead with the current. Fishes weighing nearly eighty pounds are sometimes taken in this way. The natives are always looking out for opportunities of procuring food so easily, and never hesitate to eat any fish, although they may have been dead for some time.

I have never seen the natives use hooks in fishing of their own manufacture, nor do I believe that they ever make any, though they are glad enough to get them from Europeans.

The large fresh-water lobster is sometimes procured by diving, in which case the females are generally employed, as the weather is cold, and night is the best time to procure them. It is extraordinary to see a party of women plunge into the water on a cold dark night, and swim and dive about amongst logs, stumps, roots, and weeds without ever hurting themselves, and seldom failing to obtain the object of their search.

Turtle are procured in the same way, but generally by the men, and in the day time.

Muscles of a very large kind are also got by diving. The women whose duty it is to collect these, go into the water with small nets (len-ko) hung round their necks, and diving to the bottom pick up as many as they can, put them into their bags, and rise to the surface for fresh air, repeating the operation until their bags have been filled. They have the power of remaining for a long time under the water, and when they rise to the surface for air, the head and sometimes the mouth only is exposed. A stranger suddenly coming to the river when they were all below, would be puzzled to make out what the black objects were, so frequently appearing and disappearing in the water.

Cray-fish of the small kind (u-kod-ko) weighing from four to six ounces are obtained by the women wading into the water as already described, or by men wading and using a large bow-net, called a "wharro," which is dragged along by two or three of them close to the bottom where the water is not too deep.

Frogs are dug out of the ground by the women, or caught in the marshes, and used in every stage from the tadpole upwards.

Rats are also dug out of the ground, but they are procured in the greatest numbers and with the utmost facility when the approach of the floods in the river flats compels them to evacuate their domiciles. A variety is procured among the scrubs under a singular pile or nest which they make of sticks, in the shape of a hay-cock, three or four feet high and many feet in circumference. A great many occupy the same pile and are killed with sticks as they run out.

Snakes, lizards and other reptiles are procured among the rocks or in the scrubs. Grubs are got out of the gum-tree into which they eat their way, as also out of the roots of the mimosa, the leaves of the zamia, the trunk of the xanthorra, and a variety of other plants and shrubs.

One particularly large white grub, and a great bon-bouche to the natives, is procured out of the ground. It is about four inches long and half an inch in thickness, and is obtained by attaching a thin narrow hook of hard wood to the long, wiry shoots of the polygonum, and then pushing this gently down the hole through which the grub has burrowed into the earth until it is hooked. Grubs are procured at a depth of seven feet in this way without the delay or trouble of digging.

Moths are procured as before described; or the larger varieties are caught at nights whilst flying about.

Fungi are abundant, and of great variety. Some are obtained from the surface of the ground, others below it, and others again from the trunks and boughs of trees.

Roots of all kinds are procured by digging, one of the most important being that of the flag or cooper's reed, which grows in marshes or alluvial soils that are subject to periodical inundations. This is used more or less at all seasons of the year, but is best after the floods have retired and the tops have become decayed and been burnt off. The root is roasted in hot ashes, and chewed, when it affords a nutritious and pleasant farinaceous food.

The belillah is another important bulbous root, which also grows on lands subject to floods. It is about the size of a walnut, of a hard and oily nature, and is prepared by being roasted and pounded into a thin cake between two stones. Immense tracts of country are covered with this plant on the flats of the Murray, which in the distance look like the most beautiful and luxuriant meadows. After the floods have retired I have seen several hundreds of acres, with the stems of the plant six or seven feet high, and growing so closely together as to render it very difficult to penetrate far amongst them.

The thick pulpy leaf of the mesembryanthemum is in general use in all parts of Australia which I have visited, and is eaten as a sort of relish with almost every other kind of food. That which grows upon the elevated table lands is preferred to that which is found in the valleys. It is selected when the full vigour of the plant begins to decline and the tips of the leaves become red, but before the leaf is at all withered. The fruit is used both when first ripe and also after it has become dried up and apparently withered. In each case it has an agreeable flavour and is much prized by the natives.

Many other descriptions of fruits and berries are made use of in different parts of the continent, the chief of which, so far as their use has come under my own observation, are—

1. A kind of fruit called in the Moorunde dialect "ketango," about the size and shape of a Siberian crab, but rounder. When this is ripe, it is of a deep red colour, and consists of a solid mealy substance, about the eighth of an inch in thickness, enclosing a large round stone, which, upon being broken, yields a well-flavoured kernel. The edible part of the fruit has an agreeable acid taste, and makes excellent puddings or preserves, for which purpose it is now extensively used by Europeans. The shrub on which this grows, is very elegant and graceful, and varies from four to twelve feet in height. [Note 71: A species of fusanus.] When in full bearing, nothing can exceed its beauty, drooping beneath its crimson load.

Another shrub found in the scrubs, may sometimes be mistaken for this, as it bears in appearance a similar fruit; but on being tasted, it is bitter and nauseous. This in the Murray dialect is called "netting." The natives prepare it by baking it in an oven, which takes the bitter taste away. The "netting" is earlier in season than the "ketango."

2. A berry about the size and shape of a large sloe, but with a smaller stone; conical in shape, and rounded at the large end. This fruit is juicy and saline, though not disagreeable in taste. There are several varieties of it, which when ripe are of a black, red, or yellow colour. The black is the best. The bush upon which it grows is a salsolaceous bramble [Note 72: *Nitraria Australis*], and is found in large quantities on the saline flats, bordering some parts of the Murrumbidgee and Murray rivers; and along the low parts of the southern coast, immediately behind the ridges bounding the sea shore. It is a staple article of food in its season, among the natives of those districts where it abounds, and is eaten by them raw, stone and all.

3. A small berry or currant, called by the natives of Moorunde "eertapko," about the size of No. 2. shot. When ripe it is red, and of an agreeable acid flavour. It grows upon a low creeping tap-rooted plant, of a salsolaceous character, found in the alluvial flats of the Murray, among the polygonum brushes, and in many other places. A single plant will spread over an area of many yards in diameter, covering the dry and arid ground with a close, soft, and velvety carpet in the heat of summer, at which time the fruit is in perfection. To collect so small a berry with facility, and in abundance, the natives cut a rounded tray of thin bark, two or three feet long, and six or eight inches wide, over this they lift up the plant, upon which the fruit grows, and shake the berries into it. When a sufficiency has been collected, the berries are skilfully tossed into the air, and separated from the leaves and dirt. The natives are very fond of this fruit, which affords them an inexhaustible resource for many weeks. In an hour a native could collect more than he could use in a day.

The other sorts of fruits and berries are numerous and varied, but do not merit particular description.

[Note 73: Mr. Simpson gives the following account of the Bunya Bunya, a fruit-bearing tree lately discovered on the N.E. coast of New Holland.

"Ascending a steep hill, some four miles further on, we passed through a bunya scrub, and for the first time had an opportunity of examining this noble tree more closely. It raises its majestic head above every other tree in the forest, and must, therefore, frequently reach the height of 250 feet; the trunk is beautifully formed, being as straight as an arrow, and perfectly branchless for above two-thirds of its height; branches then strike off, nearly at right angles from the trunk, forming circles which gradually diminish in diameter till they reach the summit, which terminates in a single shoot; the foliage shining, dark green, the leaves acutely pointed and lanceolate, with large green cones, the size of a child's head, hanging from the terminal branches in the fruiting season (January). It is, too, very remarkable that the bunya tree, according to the natives, is nowhere to be met with but in these parts; it is, however, there is no doubt, a species of the araucaria genus, well known in South America; the timber, when green, is white, fine grained and very tough, but whether it retains these qualities when dry, has not yet been determined. The Aborigines are particularly fond of the bunya nuts, which are as large as a full sized almond, including the shell, and, in good seasons, come from a distance of 100 or 200 miles to feast upon them."]

Bark from the roots of trees and shrubs is roasted, and then pounded between two stones for use.

Gums exude from the trees on which they are procured. These are generally varieties of the Mimosa.

Manna exudes in great abundance from the tree already mentioned, as constituting the firewood which the natives use in fishing by night. It is of a mottled red or brown colour, of a firm consistency and sweet taste, resembling exactly in appearance, flavour, and colour, the manna used medicinally in Europe.

Another variety is yielded by the *Eucalyptus mannifera* and is found early in the morning under the tree, scattered on the ground. This is beautifully white and delicate, resembling flakes of snow.

Honey is procured by steeping the cones of the *Banksia* or other melliferous flowers in water. It is procured pure from the hives of the native bees, found in cavities of rocks, and the hollow branches of trees. The method of discovering the hive is ingenious. Having caught one of the honey bees, which in size exceeds very little the common house fly, the native sticks a piece of feather or white down to it with gum, and then letting it go, sets off after it as fast as he can: keeping his eye steadily fixed upon the insect, he rushes along like a madman, tumbling over trees and bushes that lie in his way, but rarely losing sight of his object, until conducted to its well-filled store, he is amply paid for all his trouble. The honey is not so firm as that of the English bee, but is of very fine flavour and quality.

White ants are dug in great numbers out of their nests in the ground, which are generally found in the scrubs. They are a favourite food of the natives in the spring of the year. The females only are used, and at a time just before depositing their eggs. They are separated from the dirt that is taken up with them, by being thrown into the air, and caught again upon a trough of bark.

The eggs of birds are extensively eaten by the natives, being chiefly confined to those kinds that leave the nest at birth, as the *leipoa*, the *emu*, the *swan*, the *goose*, the *duck*, etc. But of others, where the young remain some time in the nest after being hatched, the eggs are usually left, and the young taken before they can fly. The eggs of the *leipoa*, or native pheasant, are found in singular-looking mounds of sand, thrown up by the bird in the midst of the scrubs, and often measuring several yards in circumference. The egg is about the size of the *goose* egg, but the shell is extremely thin and fragile. The young are hatched by the heat of the sand and leaves, with which the eggs are covered. Each egg is deposited separately, and the number found in one nest varies from one to ten.

One nest that I examined, and that only a small one, was twelve yards in circumference, eighteen inches high, and shaped like a dome. It was formed entirely of sand scraped up by the bird with its feet. Under the centre of the dome, and below the level of the surrounding ground was an irregular oval hole, about eighteen inches deep, and twelve in diameter. In this, the eggs were deposited in different layers among sand and leaves; on the lower tier was only one egg, on the next two, at a depth of four or five inches from the ground. All the eggs were placed upon their smaller ends, and standing upright. The colour of the egg is a dark reddish pink; its length, three inches six-tenths; breadth, two inches two-tenths; circumference, lengthwise, ten inches, and across, seven inches two-tenths. The eggs appear to be deposited at considerable intervals. In the nest alluded to, two eggs had only been laid sixteen days after it was discovered, at which time there had been one previously deposited. The bird is shaped like a hen pheasant, of a brownish colour, barred with black, and its weight is about four pounds and a half.

The eggs of the *emu* are rather smaller than those of the ostrich. They are of a dark green colour and the shell is very thick. They are deposited by the bird almost upon the ground, in the vicinity of a few bushes, or tufts of grass, and usually in a country that is tolerably open; a great many eggs are found in one nest, so that it is generally looked upon by the natives as a great prize.

Eggs are eaten in all stages. I have even seen rotten ones roasted, and devoured with great relish.

Kangaroos are speared, netted, or caught in pit falls. Four methods of spearing them are practised. 1st. A native travelling with his family through the woods, when he sees a kangaroo

feeding or sleeping, will steal silently and cautiously upon it, keeping, as he advances, a tree or shrub between himself and the animal, or holding up before him, if he be in an open place, a large branch of a tree, until sufficiently near to throw the fatal weapon. 2ndly. Two natives get upon the track of a kangaroo, which they follow up perseveringly even for two or three days, sleeping upon it at night, and renewing their pursuit in the morning, until, at last, the wearied animal, fairly tired out by its relentless pursuers, is no longer able to fly before them, and at last becomes a prize to the perseverance of the hunters. 3rdly. A small hut of reeds is made near the springs, or water holes, in those districts, where water is scarce; and in this, or in the top of a tree, if there be one near, the native carefully conceals himself, and patiently waits until his game comes to drink, when he is almost sure to strike it with his spear, seldom quitting his lurking place without an ample remuneration for his confinement. 4thly. A large party of men go out early in the morning, generally armed with barbed spears, and take their stations upon ground that has been previously fixed upon in a large semicircle. The women and children, with a few men, then beat up, and fire the country for a considerable extent, driving the game before them in the direction of the persons who are lying in wait, and who gradually contract the space they had been spread over, until they meet the other party, and then closing their ranks in a ring upon the devoted animals, with wild cries and shouts they drive them back to the centre as they attempt to escape, until, at last, in the conflict, many of them are slaughtered. At other times, the ground is so selected as to enable them to drive the game over a precipice, or into a river, where it is easily taken. Netting the kangaroo does not require so large a party; it is done by simply setting a strong net (mugn-ko) across the path, which the animal is accustomed to frequent, and keeping it in its place by long sticks, with a fork upon the top. A few natives then shew themselves in a direction opposite to that of the net, and the kangaroo being alarmed, takes to his usual path, gets entangled in the meshes, and is soon despatched by persons who have been lying in wait to pounce upon him.

Pitfalls are also dug to catch the kangaroo around the springs, or pools of water they are accustomed to frequent. These are covered lightly over with small sticks, boughs, etc. and the animal going to drink, hops upon them, and falls into the pit without being able to get out again. I have only known this method of taking the kangaroo practised in Western Australia, between Swan River and King George's Sound,

The emu is taken similarly to the kangaroo. It is speared in the first, third, and fourth methods I have described. It is also netted like the kangaroo, indeed with the same net, only that the places selected for setting it are near the entrance to creeks, ravines, flats bounded by steep banks, and any other place where the ground is such as to hold out the hope, that by driving up the game it may be compelled, by surrounding scouts, to pass the place where the net is set. When caught the old men hasten up, and clasping the bird firmly round the neck with their arms, hold it or throw it on the ground, whilst others come to their assistance and despatch it. This is, however, a dangerous feat, and I have known a native severely wounded in attempting it; a kick from an emu would break a person's leg, though the natives generally keep so close to the bird as to prevent it from doing them much harm.

The emu is frequently netted by night through a peculiarity in the habits of the bird, that is well-known to the natives, and which is, that it generally comes back every night to sleep on one spot for a long time together. Having ascertained where the sleeping place is, the natives set the net at some little distance away, and then supplying themselves with fire-sticks, form a line from each end of the net, diverging in the distance. The party may now be considered as forming two sides of a triangle, with the net at the apex and the game about the middle of the base; as soon as the sides are formed, other natives arrange themselves in a line at the base, and put the bird up. The emu finding only one course free from fire-sticks, viz. that towards the net or apex of the triangle, takes that direction, and becomes ensnared.

Opossums are of various kinds and sizes. They inhabit the hollows of trees, or sometimes the tops, where they make a house for themselves with boughs. They are also found in the holes

of rocks. They are hunted both in the day-time and by moon-light. During the day the native, as he passes along, examines minutely the bark of the trees, to see whether any marks have been left by the claws of the animal in climbing on the previous night. If he finds any he is sure that an opossum is concealed, either in that tree or one adjoining. The way he distinguishes whether the marks are recently made or otherwise is, by examining the appearance of the bark where the wound is, if fresh it is white, has rough edges, or has grains of sand adhering to it; if otherwise it is dry and brown, and free from loose particles. Having ascertained that an opossum has recently been there, he then ascends the tree to look for it; this, if the tree be in a leaning position, or has a rough bark, is not difficult to him, and he rarely requires any other aid than his hands and feet; but if the bark be smooth, and the tree straight, or of very large dimensions, he requires the assistance of his stone hatchet, or of a strong sharp-pointed stick, flattened on one side near the point (called in the Adelaide dialect, "Wadna," in that of Moorunde "Ngakko,"); with this instrument a notch is made in the bark about two feet above the ground. In this the small toes of the left foot are placed, the left arm is employed in clasping the trunk of the tree, and the right in cutting another notch for the right foot, about two feet above the first; but a little to one side of it, the wadna or ngakko is now stuck firmly in the bark above, and serves to enable him to raise the body whilst gaining the second notch, into which the ball of the great toe of the right foot is placed, and the implement liberated to make a third step on the left side, and so on successively until the tree is ascended. The descent is made in the same manner, by clasping the tree, and supporting the feet in the notches. The principle of climbing in the way described, appears to consist in always having three points of contact with the tree, either two arms and one leg, or two legs and one arm.

Having got up the tree, the native proceeds to search for any holes there may be in its trunk, or among the boughs; these vary from one foot to nine, or more, in depth, for the whole trunk itself is sometimes hollow. To ascertain in which hole the opossum is, the native drops in a pebble or a piece of bark, or a broken bit of stick, and then applying his ear to the outside, listens for the rustling motion made by the animal in shifting its position, when disturbed by what has been dropped upon it. A stick is sometimes made use of, if the hole be not very deep, for the same purpose, after inserting it in the hole, and twisting the rough end round and withdrawing it, he looks to see if any fur is left on the point, if so, the animal is there, but if the point of the stick shews no fur, he goes to the next hole or tree, and so on until he finds it. If not very far in the hole the native puts in his arm, and draws it out by the tail, striking its head violently against the tree to prevent its biting him, as soon as it is clear of the orifice; if the hole be deep, the furthest point to which the animal can recede is ascertained, and an opening made near it with whatever implement he may be using. If the whole trunk of the tree, or a large portion of it be hollow, a fire is made in the lower opening, which soon drives out the game.

When opossums are hunted by moonlight, the native dog is useful in scenting them along the ground where they sometimes feed, and in guiding the native to the tree they have ascended, when alarmed at his approach. They are then either knocked down with sticks or the tree is ascended as in the day time.

Flying squirrels are procured in the same way as opossums. The sloth, which is an animal as large as a good sized monkey, is also caught among the branches of the larger scrub-trees, among which it hides itself; but it is never found in holes.

Wallabies are of many kinds, and are killed in various ways. By hunting with bwirris, by nets, by digging out of the ground; the larger sorts, as rock wallabies, by spearing, and several kinds by making runs, into which they are driven. In hunting with bwirris (a short heavy stick with a knob at one end) a party of natives go out into the scrub and beat the bushes in line, if any game gets up, the native who sees it, gives a peculiar "whir-rr" as a signal for the others to look out, and the animal is at once chased and bwirris thrown at him in all directions, the

peculiar sound of the “whir-rr” always guiding them to the direction he has taken. It rarely happens that an animal escapes if the party of natives be at all numerous.

In netting the wallabies, a party of seven or eight men go in advance, with each a net of from twenty to forty feet long, and when they arrive near the runs, usually made use of by these animals, a favourable spot is selected, and the nets set generally in a line and nearly together, each native concealing himself near his own net. The women and children who, in the mean time had been making a considerable circuit, now begin to beat amongst the bushes with the wind, shouting and driving the wallabies before them towards the nets, where they are caught and killed.

Other species of the wallabie burrow in the ground like rabbits, and are dug out. The large rock-wallabies are speared by the natives creeping upon them stealthily among the rugged rocks which they frequent, on the summits of precipitous heights which have craggy or overhanging cliffs.

In making runs for taking the wallabie, the natives break the branches from the bushes, and laying them one upon another, form, through the scrubs, two lines of bush fence, diverging from an apex sometimes to the extent of several miles, and having at intervals large angles formed by the fence diverging. At the principal apex and at all the angles or corners the bushes are tied up, and a hole in the fence left like the run of a hare. At each of these a native is stationed with his bwirris, and the women then beating up the country, from the base of the triangle drive up the game, which finding themselves stopped by the bush fence on either side, run along in search of an opening until the first angle presents itself, when they try to escape by the run, and are knocked on the head by the native guarding it.

Native companions and swans are sometimes speared or killed with bwirris; the latter are also caught easily in the water holes or lakes when moulting, as they are then unable to fly. Pelicans are caught in nets or whilst asleep in the water, by natives wading in and seizing them by the legs.

Wild dogs are speared, but young ones are often kept and tamed, to assist in hunting, in which they are very useful. The wombat is driven to his hole with dogs at night, and a fire being lighted inside, the mouth is closed with stones and earth. The animal being by this means suffocated, is dug out at convenience.

Birds are killed on the wing, with bwirris, or whilst resting on the ground, or in the water, or upon branches of trees. They are also taken by spearing, by snaring, by noosing, and by netting. In spearing them the natives make use of a very light reed spear (kiko), which is pointed with hard wood, and projected when used, with the nga-waonk or throwing stick. They resort to the lagoons or river flats, when flooded, and either wading or in canoes, chase and spear the wild fowl. The kiko is thrown to a very great distance, with amazing rapidity and precision, so that a native is frequently very successful by this method, particularly so when the young broods of duck and other wild fowl are nearly full grown, but still unable to fly far. Getting into his canoe, the native paddles along with extraordinary celerity after his game, chasing them from one side of the lagoon to the other, until he loads himself with spoil. Ducks and teal are caught by snaring, which is practised in the following manner. After ascertaining where there is a shelving bank to any of the lagoons, which is frequented by these birds, and upon which there is grass, or other food that they like near the edges, the natives get a number of strong reeds, bend them in the middle, and force the two ends of each into the ground, about seven inches apart, forming a number of triangles, with their uppermost extremities about five or six inches from the ground. From these, strings are suspended with slip nooses, and when a sufficient number are set, the natives go away, to let the ducks come up to feed. This they soon do; and whilst poking their heads about in every direction a great many push them through the snares and get hung.

Noosing waterfowl is another general and very successful mode of taking them. It is performed by a native, with a tat-tat-ko, or long rod, tapering like a fishing rod, but longer, and having a piece of string at the end, with a slip noose working over the pliant twig which forms the last joint of the rod. [Note 74: Plate 4, fig. 1. (not reproduced in this etext)] This being prepared, and it having been ascertained where the birds are, the native binds a quantity of grass or weeds around his head, and then taking his long instrument, plunges into the water and swims slowly and cautiously towards them, whilst they see nothing but a tuft of grass or weeds coming floating towards them, of which they take no notice, until coming close upon them he gently raises the tapering end of the instrument, and carefully putting the noose over the head of the bird, draws it under water towards him. After taking it out of the noose, he tucks its head in his belt, or lets it float on the water, whilst he proceeds to catch another, or as many more as he can before the birds take the alarm at the struggles of their companions, and fly away. A windy day is generally selected for this employment, when the water is ruffled by waves. On such occasions a skilful native will secure a great many birds.

Netting birds remains to be described, and is the most destructive mode of taking them of any that is practised. Geese, ducks, teal, widgeons, shags, pelicans, pigeons, and others are procured in this way. The method adopted is as follows:—a large square or oblong net, (kue-rad-ko) from thirty to sixty feet broad, and from twenty to forty deep, is formed by lacing together pieces of old fishing nets, or any others, made of light twine, that they may have. A strong cord is then passed through the meshes of one end, and tied at both extremes of the net. The natives then go down to a lagoon of moderate width, where two tall trees may be standing opposite to each other on different sides, or they select an opening of a similar kind among the trees on the bank of the river, through which the ducks, or other birds, are in the habit of passing when flying between the river and the lagoons. An old man ascends each of the trees, and over the topmost branch of both lowers the end of a strong cord passing through the net. The other end is tied near the root of each tree, and serves for the native, who is stationed there, to raise or lower the net as it may be required. When set, the ropes are hauled tight, and the net dangles in the air between the two trees, hanging over the lagoon, or dry passage, as the case may be. All being ready, a native is left holding each end of the rope, and others are stationed at convenient places near, with little round pieces of bark in their hands to throw at the birds, and drive them onwards as they approach the net. The women are then sent to put the birds up, and they come flying through the open space towards the net, not dreaming of the evil that awaits them; as they approach nearer, the two natives at the trees utter a shrill whistle, resembling the note of the hawk, upon which the flock, which usually consists of ducks, lower their flight at once, and proceeding onwards, strike full against the net, which is instantly lowered by the men attending to it, and the birds are left struggling in the water, or on the ground, entangled in its meshes, whilst the natives are busy paddling in their canoes, or scampering towards the net on the ground, to wring their necks off, and get the instrument of destruction raised again, to be ready for the next flight that may come. Should the birds fly too high, or be inclined to take any other direction, little pieces of bark are thrown above them, or across their path, by the natives stationed for that purpose. These circling through the air, make a whirring noise like the swoop of the eagle when darting on his prey, and the birds fancying their enemy upon them, recede from the pieces of bark, and lowering their flight, become entangled in the net. Early in the morning, late in the evening, and occasionally in the night, this work is conducted, with the greatest success, though many are caught sometimes in the day.

As many as fifty birds are taken in a single haul. I have myself, with the aid of a native, caught thirty-three, and many more would have been got, but that the net was old, and the birds broke through it before they could be all killed. On other occasions, I have been out with the natives, where a party of five or six have procured from twenty to thirty ducks, on an average, daily, for many days successively. In these occupations the natives make use of a peculiar shrill whistle to frighten down the birds; it is produced by pulling out the under lip with the fore-finger and thumb, and pressing it together, whilst the tongue is placed against

the groove, or hollow thus formed, and the breath strongly forced through. Whistling is also practised in a variety of other ways, and has peculiar sounds well known to the natives, which indicate the object of the call. It is used to call attention, to point out that game is near, to make each other aware of their respective positions in a wooded country, or to put another on his guard that an enemy is near, etc., etc.

Such is an outline of some of the kinds of food used by the natives, and the modes of procuring it as practised in various parts of Australia where I have been. There is an endless variety of other articles, and an infinite number of minute differences in the ways of procuring them, which it is unnecessary to enter upon in a work which professes to give only a general account of the Aborigines, their manners, habits, and customs, and not a full or complete history, which could only be compiled after the observation of many years devoted exclusively to so comprehensive a subject.

In the preparation and cooking of their food, and in the extent to which this is carried, there are almost as many differences as there are varieties of food. Having no vessels capable of resisting the action of fire, the natives are unacquainted with the simple process of boiling. Their culinary operations are therefore confined to broiling on the hot coals, baking in hot ashes, and roasting, or steaming in ovens. The native oven is made by digging a circular hole in the ground, of a size corresponding to the quantity of food to be cooked. It is then lined with stones in the bottom, and a strong fire made over them, so as to heat them thoroughly, and dry the hole. As soon as the stones are judged to be sufficiently hot, the fire is removed, and a few of the stones taken, and put inside the animal to be roasted if it be a large one. A few leaves, or a handful of grass, are then sprinkled over the stones in the bottom of the oven, on which the animal is deposited, generally whole, with hot stones, which had been kept for that purpose, laid upon the top of it. It is covered with grass, or leaves, and then thickly coated over with earth, which effectually prevents the heat from escaping. Bark is sometimes used to cover the meat, instead of grass or leaves, and is in some respects better adapted for that purpose, being less liable to let dirt into the oven. I have seen meat cooked by the natives in this manner, which, when taken out, looked as clean and nicely roasted as any I ever saw from the best managed kitchen.

If the oven is required for steaming food, a process principally applied to vegetables and some kinds of fruits, the fire is in the same way removed from the heated stones, but instead of putting on dry grass or leaves, wet grass or water weeds are spread over them. The vegetables tied up in small bundles are piled over this in the central part of the oven, wet grass being placed above them again, dry grass or weeds upon the wet, and earth over all. In putting the earth over the heap, the natives commence around the base, gradually filling it upwards. When about two-thirds covered up all round, they force a strong sharp-pointed stick in three or four different places through the whole mass of grass weeds and vegetables, to the bottom of the oven. Upon withdrawing the stick, water is poured through the holes thus made upon the hissing stones below, the top grass is hastily closed over the apertures and the whole pile as rapidly covered up as possible to keep in the steam. The gathering vegetable food, and in fact the cooking and preparing of food generally, devolves upon the women, except in the case of an emu or a kangaroo, or some of the larger and more valuable animals, when the men take this duty upon themselves.

In cooking vegetables, a single oven will suffice for three or four families, each woman receiving the same bundles of food when cooked, which she had put in. The smaller kinds of fish and shell-fish, birds and animals, frogs, turtle, eggs, reptiles, gums, etc., are usually broiled upon the embers. Roots, bark of trees, etc., are cooked in the hot ashes. Fungi are either eaten raw or are roasted. The white ant is always eaten raw. The larvae of insects and the leaves of plants are either eaten raw or in a cooked state. The larger animals, as the kangaroo, emu, native dog, etc. and the larger fishes, are usually roasted in the oven.

In preparing the food for the cooking process a variety of forms are observed. In most animals, as the opossum, wallabie, dog, kangaroo, etc. the the bones of the legs are invariably broken, and the fur is singed off; a small aperture is made in the belly, the entrails withdrawn, and the hole closed with a wooden skewer, to keep in the gravy whilst roasting. The entrails of all animals, birds, and fishes, are made use of, and are frequently eaten whilst the animal itself is being prepared. Most birds have the feathers pulled or singed off, they are then thrown on the fire for a moment or two and when warm are withdrawn, skinned and the skin eaten. The meat is now separated on each side of the breast bone, the limbs are disjointed and thrown back, and the bird is placed upon the fire, and soon cooked, from the previous dissection it had undergone, and from hot coals being put above it.

The smaller fish and reptiles are simply thrown upon the fire, sometimes gutted, at other times not. The larger fish are divided into three pieces, in the following manner. The fish is laid on its side, and a longitudinal cut made from the head to within three or four inches of the tail, just above where the ribs are joined to the back bone, these are separated by a sharp pointed stick, and the same done on the other side; a transverse incision is then made near the root of the tail, the gills are separated from the head, the fleshy part covering the back dissected from one to two inches thick, over the whole surface left between the longitudinal cuts that had been made in the sides, and extending from the head to the transverse incision near the tail. The divisions then consist of three pieces, one comprising the head, backbone, and tail, another the fleshy part that covered the back, and the third the belly and sides. The last is the most prized of the three. This method of dividing the fish is well adapted for ensuring rapid preparation in the process of cooking; it is also well suited for satisfying the respective owners and claimants; the three pieces being, if not quite equal in size, sufficiently so for the purpose of partition.

There are many usages in force among the natives respecting the particular kinds of food allowed to be eaten at different ages; restrictions and limitations of many kinds are placed upon both sexes at different stages of life. What is proper to be eaten at one period, is disallowed at another, and vice versa. And although laws of this nature appear to be in force throughout the whole continent, there appear to be occasional differences of custom as to restriction in regard to both food and age. It also appears that there are more restrictions placed upon the females, until past the age of child-bearing, than upon the males.

Infants are not often weaned until between two and three years old; but during this time any food is given to them which they can eat, except those kind of vegetables which are likely to disagree with them. No restrictions are placed upon very young children of either sex, a portion being given to them of whatever food their parents may have. About nine or ten years appears to be the age at which limitations commence. Boys are now forbidden to eat the red kangaroo, or the female or the young ones of the other kinds; the musk duck, the white crane, the bandicoot, the native pheasant, (leipoa, meracco), the native companion, some kinds of fungi, the old male and female opossum, a kind of wallabie (linkara), three kinds of fish (toor-rue, toitchock, and boolye-a), the black duck, widgeon, whistling duck, shag (yarrilla), eagle, female water-mole (nee-witke), two kinds of turtles (rinka and tung-kanka), and some other varieties of food.

When young men they are disallowed the black duck, the widgeon, the whistling duck, the emu, the eggs of the emu, a fish called kalapko, the red kangaroo, the young of other kinds of kangaroo, if taken from the pouch; a kind of shag called yarrilla, the snake (yarl-dakko), the white crane, the eagle, a kind of water-mole (nee-witke), two kinds of turtle (rinka and tung-kanka), the musk-duck, the native dog, the large grub dug out of the ground (ronk), a vegetable food called war-itch (being that the emu feeds upon), the native companion, bandicoot, old male opossum, wallabie (linkara), coote, two fishes (toor-rue and toit-chock), etc. etc.

Married men, until from thirty-five to forty years of age, are still forbidden the red kangaroo, the young of any kangaroo from the pouch, the fish kelapko, the shag yarrilla, the coote, the white crane, the turtle rinka, the native companion, the eagle, etc.

Young females, before the breasts are fully developed, are disallowed the young of any of the kangaroo species if taken from the pouch, the red kangaroo, the white crane, the bandicoot, the native companion, the old male opossum, the wallabie (linkara), the shag (yarrilla), the eagle, etc.

Full grown young females are not allowed to eat the male opossum, the wallabie (linkara), the red kangaroo, the fish kelapko, the black duck, the widgeon, the whistling duck, the coote, the native companion, two turtles (rinka and tung-kanka), the emu, the emu's egg, the snake (yarl-dakko), cray-fish which may have deformed claws, the female or the young from the pouch of any kangaroo, the musk duck, the white crane, the bandicoot, the wild dog, two kinds of fish (toor-rue and toitchock), the shag (yarrilla), the water mole (neewitke), the ground grub (ronk), the vegetable food eaten by the emu (war-itch), etc. When menstruating, they are not allowed to eat fish of any kind, or to go near the water at all; it being one of their superstitions, that if a female, in that state, goes near the water, no success can be expected by the men in fishing. Fish that are taken by the men diving under the cliffs, and which are always females about to deposit their spawn, are also forbidden to the native women.

Old men and women are allowed to eat anything, and there are very few things that they do not eat. Among the few exceptions are a species of toad, and the young of the wombat, when very small, and before the hair is well developed.

Chapter IV.

PROPERTY IN LAND—DWELLINGS—WEAPONS—IMPLEMENTS— GOVERNMENT—CUSTOMS—SOCIAL RELATIONS—MARRIAGE— NOMENCLATURE.

It has generally been imagined, but with great injustice, as well as incorrectness, that the natives have no idea of property in land, or proprietary rights connected with it. Nothing can be further from the truth than this assumption, although men of high character and standing, and who are otherwise benevolently disposed towards the natives, have distinctly denied this right, and maintained that the natives were not entitled to have any choice of land reserved for them out of their own possessions, and in their respective districts.

In the public journals of the colonies the question has often been discussed, and the same unjust assertion put forth. A single quotation will be sufficient to illustrate the spirit prevailing upon this point. It is from a letter on the subject published in South Australian Register of the 1st August, 1840:—"It would be difficult to define what conceivable proprietary rights were ever enjoyed by the miserable savages of South Australia, who never cultivated an inch of the soil, and whose ideas of the value of its direct produce never extended beyond obtaining a sufficiency of pieces of white chalk and red ochre wherewith to bedaub their bodies for their filthy corrobberies." Many similar proofs might be given of the general feeling entertained respecting the rights of the Aborigines, arising out of their original possession of the soil. It is a feeling, however, that can only have originated in an entire ignorance of the habits, customs, and ideas of this people. As far as my own observation has extended, I have found that particular districts, having a radius perhaps of from ten to twenty miles, or in other cases varying according to local circumstances, are considered generally as being the property and hunting—grounds of the tribes who frequent them. These districts are again parcelled out among the individual members of the tribe. Every male has some portion of land, of which he can always point out the exact boundaries. These properties are subdivided by a father among his sons during his own lifetime, and descend in almost hereditary succession. A man can dispose of or barter his land to others; but a female never inherits, nor has primogeniture among the sons any peculiar rights or advantages. Tribes can only come into each other's districts by permission, or invitation, in which case, strangers or visitors are always well treated. The following extract from Captain Grey's work gives the result of that gentlemen's observations in Western Australia, corroborated by Dr. Lang's experience of the practice among the natives of New South Wales, (vol. ii. p. 232 to 236.)

"TRADITIONAL LAWS RELATIVE TO LANDED PROPERTY.—Landed property does not belong to a tribe, or to several families, but to a single male; and the limits of his property are so accurately defined that every native knows those of his own land, and can point out the various objects which mark his boundary. I cannot establish the fact and the universality of this institution better than by the following letter addressed by Dr. Lang, the Principal of Sydney College, New South Wales, to Dr. Hodgkin, the zealous advocate of the Aboriginal Races:

"LIVERPOOL, 15th Nov. 1840.

"My Dear Friend,—In reply to the question which you proposed to me some time ago, in the course of conversation in London, and of which you have reminded me in the letter I had the pleasure of receiving from you yesterday, with the pamphlets and letters for America, viz.—'Whether the Aborigines of the Australian continent have any idea of property in land,' I beg to answer most decidedly in the affirmative. It is well known that these Aborigines in no instance cultivate the soil, but subsist entirely by hunting and fishing, and on the wild roots they find in certain localities (especially the common fern), with occasionally a little wild honey; indigenous fruits being exceedingly rare. The whole race is divided into tribes, more

or less numerous, according to circumstances, and designated from the localities they inhabit; for although universally a wandering race with respect to places of habitation, their wanderings are circumscribed by certain well-defined limits, beyond which they seldom pass, except for purposes of war or festivity. In short, every tribe has its own district, the boundaries of which are well known to the natives generally; and within that district all the wild animals are considered as much the property of the tribe inhabiting, or rather ranging on, its whole extent, as the flocks of sheep and herds of cattle, that have been introduced into the country by adventurous Europeans, are held by European law and usage the property of their respective owners. In fact, as the country is occupied chiefly for pastoral purposes, the difference between the Aboriginal and the European ideas of property in the soil is more imaginary than real, the native grass affording subsistence to the kangaroos of the natives, as well as to the wild cattle of the Europeans, and the only difference indeed being, that the former are not branded with a particular mark like the latter, and are somewhat wilder and more difficult to catch. Nay, as the European regards the intrusion of any other white man upon the CATTLE-RUN, of which European law and usage have made him the possessor, and gets it punished as a trespass, the Aborigines of the particular tribe inhabiting a particular district, regard the intrusion of any other tribe of Aborigines upon that district, for the purposes of kangaroo hunting, etc. as an intrusion, to be resisted and punished by force of arms. In short, this is the frequent cause of Aboriginal, as it is of European wars; man, in his natural state, being very much alike in all conditions—jealous of his rights, and exceedingly pugnacious. It is true, the European intruders pay no respect to these Aboriginal divisions of the territory, the black native being often hunted off his own ground, or destroyed by European violence, dissipation, or disease, just as his kangaroos are driven off that ground by the European's black cattle; but this surely does not alter the case as to the right of the Aborigines.

“But particular districts are not merely the property of particular tribes; particular sections or portions of these districts are universally recognised by the natives as the property of individual members of these tribes; and when the owner of such a section or portion of territory (as I ascertained was the case at King George's Island) has determined on burning off the grass on his land, which is done for the double purpose of enabling the natives to take the older animals more easily, and to provide a new crop of sweeter grass for the rising generation of the forest, not only all the other individuals of his own tribe, but whole tribes from other districts are invited to the hunting party, and the feast and dance, or corrobory that ensue; the wild animals on the ground being all considered the property of the owner of the land. I have often heard natives myself tell me, in answer to my questions on the subject, who were the Aboriginal owners of particular tracts of land now held by Europeans; and indeed this idea of property in the soil, FOR HUNTING PURPOSES, is universal among the Aborigines. They seldom complain of the intrusion of Europeans; on the contrary, they are pleased at their SITTING DOWN, as they call it, on their land: they do not perceive that their own circumstances are thereby sadly altered for the worse in most cases; that their means of subsistence are gradually more and more limited, and their numbers rapidly diminished: in short, in the simplicity of their hearts, they take the frozen adder in their bosom, and it stings them to death. They look for a benefit or blessing from European intercourse, and it becomes their ruin.

“If I had a little more leisure I would have written more at length, and in a style more worthy of your perusal; but you may take it as certain, at all events, that the Aborigines of Australia HAVE an idea of property in the soil in their native and original state, and that that idea is, in reality, not very different from that of the European proprietors of sheep and cattle, by whom they have, in so many instances, been dispossessed, without the slightest consideration of their rights or feelings.

“Indeed, the infinity of the native names of places, all of which are descriptive and appropriate, is of itself a PRIMA FACIE evidence of their having strong ideas of property in

the soil; for it is only where such ideas are entertained and acted on, that we find, as is certainly the case in Australia, NULLUM SINE NOMINE SAXUM.

“I am, my dear Friend, “Your’s very sincerely, “JOHN DUNMORE LANG.

“To Dr. Hodgkin.”

The dwellings of the Aborigines are simple, of a very temporary character, and requiring but little skill or labour to construct them. In the summer season, or when the weather is fine, they consist of little more than a few bushes laid one upon the other, in the form of a semicircle, as a protection from the wind, for the head, which is laid usually close up to this slight fence. In the winter, or in cold or wet weather, the semicircular form is still preserved, but the back and sides are sheltered by branches raised upon one end, meeting at the top in an arch, and supported by props in front, the convex part being always exposed to the wind. The sizes of these huts depends upon the facilities that may be afforded for making them, the number of natives, and the state of the weather.

[Note 75: “Travelled northerly for 20 miles; at evening encamped at Tarcone, adjacent to the station (then being formed) of Drs. Bernard and Kilgour. The greater part of the servants at this establishment had been convicts, they were in a state of great insubordination. My native attendants pointed out an extensive weir, 200 feet long and five feet high; they said it was the property of a family, and emphatically remarked, “that white men had stolen it and their country;” the Yow-ew-nil-lurns were the original inhabitants. “Tapoe,” the Mount Napier of Mitchell, is an isolated hill of volcanic formation; the crater is broken down on the west side to its base. The great swamp is skirted by low hills and well grassed open forest land; the natives are still the undisputed occupants, no white men having been there to dispossess them. The people who occupy the country have fixed residences; at one village were 13 large huts, they are warm and well constructed, in shape of a cupola or “kraal;” a strong frame of wood is first made, and the whole covered with thick turf, with the grass inwards; there are several varieties; those like a kraal are sometimes double, having two entrances, others are demicircular; some are made with boughs and grass, and last are the temporary screens; one hut measured 10 feet diameter by five feet high, and sufficiently strong for a man on horseback to ride over.

“Left early, attended by Pevay, to reconnoitre the country. In the marshes numerous trenches were again met with; these resembled more the works of civilized than of savage men; they were of considerable extent; one continuous treble line measured 500 yards in length, two feet in width, and from 18 inches to two feet in depth; these treble dikes led to extensive ramified watercourses; the whole covered an area of at least ten acres, and must have been done at great cost of labour to the Aborigines, a convincing proof of their persevering industry. These are the most interesting specimens of native art I had seen; thousands of yards had been accomplished; the mountain streams were made to pass through them. In fishing, the natives use the arabine or eel-pot of platted grass, from nine to twelve feet in length. On the elevated ground were some of the largest ash-hills I had seen, and must have been the work of generations; one measured 31 yards in length, 29 in width, and two in height, with hollow cavities for the natives’ bivouacs and camping places.”—”Extract from Mr. Robinson’s Letter, copied from papers relative to Australian Aborigines, printed for the House of Commons, August 1844, p. 240.”]

Sometimes each married man will have a hut for himself, his wives, and family, including perhaps occasionally his mother, or some other near relative. At other times, large long huts are constructed, in which, from five to ten families reside, each having their own separate fire. Young unmarried men frequently unite in parties of six or eight, and make a hut for themselves. The materials of which the huts are composed, are generally small branches or boughs of trees, covered in wet weather with grass, or other similar material. At other times,

and especially if large, or made in wet weather, they are formed of thick solid logs of wood, piled and arranged much in the same way as the lighter material, but presenting an appearance of durability that the others do not possess. In this case they are generally well covered over with grass, creeping plants, or whatever else may appear likely to render them waterproof. In travelling through the country, I have found that where bushes or shrubs abounded, I could at any time in an hour or two, by working hard, make myself a hut in which I could lie down, perfectly secure from any rain. The natives, of course, have much less difficulty in doing this, from their great skill and constant practice. In many parts of New Holland that I have been in, bark is almost exclusively used by the natives, for their huts; where it can be procured good it is better than any thing else. I have frequently seen sheets of bark twelve feet long, and eight or ten feet wide, without a single crack or flaw, in such cases one sheet would form a large and good hut; but even where it is of a far inferior description, it answers, by a little system in the arrangement, better than almost any thing else. Projecting, or overhanging rocks, caverns, hollows of trees, etc. etc., are also frequently made use of by the natives for lodging houses in cold or wet weather. When hostile parties are supposed to be in the neighbourhood, the natives are very cautious in selecting secret and retired places to sleep. They go up on the high grounds, back among scrubs, or encamp in the hollows of watercourses, or where there are dense bushes of polygonum, or close belts of reeds; the fires are very small on these occasions, and sometimes none are made; you may thus have a large body of natives encamped very near you without being conscious of it. I have been taken by a native to a camp of about twenty people in a dense belt of reeds, which I had gone close by without being aware of their presence, although I could not have been more than three or four yards from some of them when I passed.

It has already been remarked, that where many natives meet together, the arrangements of their respective huts depends upon the direction they have come from. In their natural state many customs and restrictions exist, which are often broken through, when they congregate in the neighbourhood of European settlements.

Such is the custom requiring all boys and uninitiated young men to sleep at some distance from the huts of the adults, and to remove altogether away in the morning as soon as daylight dawns, and the natives begin to move about. This is to prevent their seeing the women, some of whom may be menstruating; and if looked upon by the young males, it is supposed that dire results will follow. Strangers are by another similar rule always required to get to their own proper place at the camp, by going behind and not in front of the huts. In the same way, if young males meet a party of women going out to look for food, they are obliged to take a circuit to avoid going near them. It is often amusing to witness the dilemma in which a young native finds himself when living with Europeans, and brought by them into a position at variance with his prejudices on this point. All the buildings of the natives are necessarily from their habits of a very temporary character, seldom being intended for more than a few weeks' occupation, and frequently only for a few days. By this time food is likely to become scarce, or the immediate neighbourhood unclean, and a change of locality is absolutely unavoidable. When the huts are constructed, the ground is made level within, any little stumps of bushes, or plants, stones, or other things being removed, and grass, reeds, or leaves of trees frequently gathered and spread over the bottom, to form a dry and soft bed; this and their opossum cloak constitute the greatest degree of luxury to which they aspire. Occasionally native men, in very cold weather, are both without huts and clothing of any kind. In this case, many small fires are made (for the natives never make a large one), by which they keep themselves warm. I have often seen single natives sleep with a fire at their head, another at their feet, and one on either side, and as close as ever they could make them without burning themselves; indeed, sometimes within a very few inches of their bodies.

The weapons of the natives are simple and rudimental in character, but varied in their kind and make, according to the purposes for which they may be required, or the local circumstances of the district in which they are used. The spear, which is the chief weapon of

offence over all the known parts of the continent, is of two kinds, one kind is used with the throwing stick, and the other is thrown out of the hand; of each there are four varieties that I am acquainted with. Of those launched with the throwing stick there are—1, the kiko, or reed spear, pointed with hard wood; 2, the kiero, or hard wood spear, with about two feet of the flower-stem of the grass-tree jointed to the upper end; 3, a similar weapon, with five or six jags cut in the solid wood of the point upon one side; and 4, the light hard wood spear of Port Lincoln, and the coast to the eastward, where a single barb is spliced on at the extreme point with the sinew of the emu or the kangaroo: each spear averages from six to eight feet in length, and is thrown with facility and precision to distances, varying from thirty to one hundred yards, according to the kind made use of, and the skill of the native in using it.

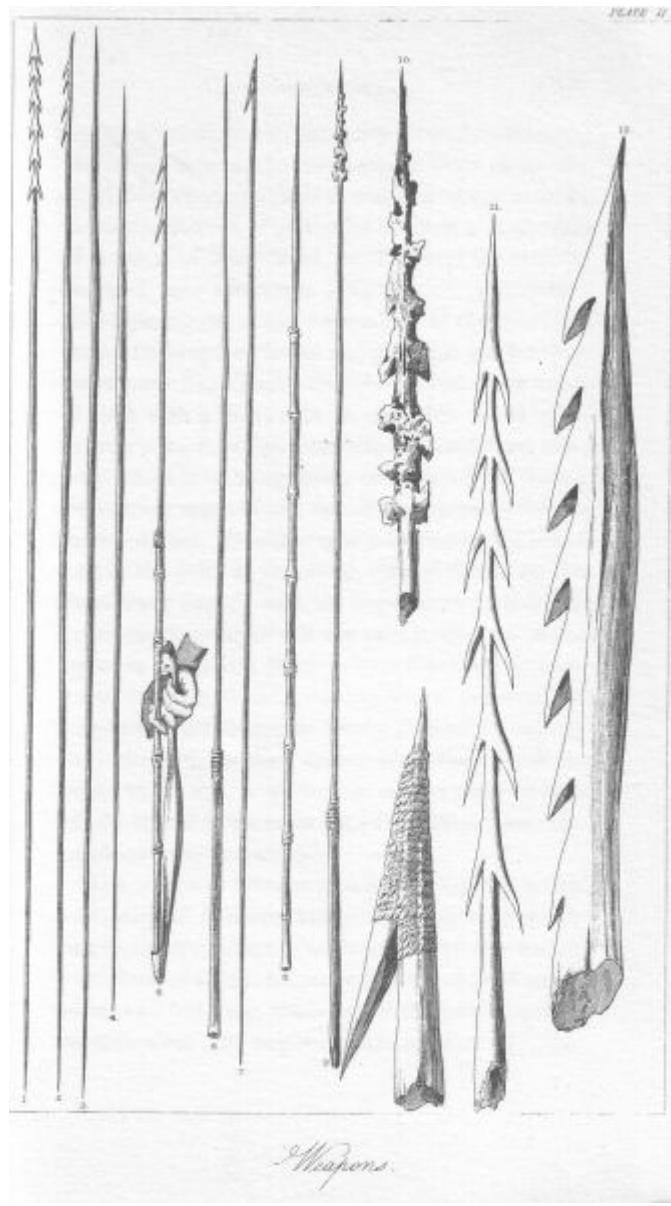


Plate II. Native Weapons

Of the large spear there is—1, the karkuroo, or smooth heavy spear, made of the gum-scrub; 2, the same description of weapon, barbed with fragments of flint or quartz; 3, another variety, having five or six jags cut at the point, upon one side; and 4, a similar weapon, with the same number of barbs cut upon both sides of the point: each of them is from twelve to fourteen feet long, and is thrown with most deadly force and accuracy to distances of from

thirty to forty feet. The fishing spear has already been described. The Nga-wa-onk, or throwing stick is from twenty to twenty-six inches in length, and is of a very similar character throughout the continent, varying a little in width or shape according to the fashion of particular districts. It consists of a piece of hard wood, broad about the middle, flattened and sometimes hollowed on the inside, and tapering to either extremity; at the point the tooth of a kangaroo is tied and gummed on, turning downwards like a hook; the opposite end has a lump of pitch with a flint set in it, moulded round so as to form a knob, which prevents the hand from slipping whilst it is being used, or it is wound round with string made of the fur of the opossum for the same purpose. In either case it is held by the lower part in the palm of the hand, clasped firmly by the three lower fingers, with its upper part resting between the fore-finger and the next; the head of the spear, in which is a small hole, is fitted to the kangaroo tooth, and then coming down between the fore-finger and thumb, is firmly grasped for throwing; the arm is then drawn back, the weapon levelled to the eye, a quivering motion given to it to steady it, and it is hurled with a rapidity, force, and precision quite incredible.

The Wangn or wangno (the boomerang of Eastern and kiley of Western Australia) is another simple but destructive weapon, in the hands of the native. It consists of a thin, flat, curved piece of hard wood, about two feet long, made out of the acacia pendula or gum-scrub, the raspberry-jam wood, or any other of a similar character, a branch or limb is selected which has naturally the requisite curve (an angle from one hundred to one hundred and thirty degrees) and is dressed down to a proper shape and thickness, and rounded somewhat at the bend, those whose angles are slightly obtuse, are usually thrown with the sharp edge against the wind, and go circling through the air with amazing velocity, and to a great height and distance, describing nearly a parabola and descending again at the foot of the person who throws them; those which have the largest obtuse angle are thrown generally against the ground from which they bound up to a great height, and with much force. With both, the natives are able to hit distant objects with accuracy, either in hunting or in war; in the latter case this weapon is particularly dangerous, as it is almost impossible, even when it is seen in the air, to tell which way it will go, or where descend. I once nearly had my arm broken by a wangno, whilst standing within a yard of the native who threw it, and looking out purposely for it.

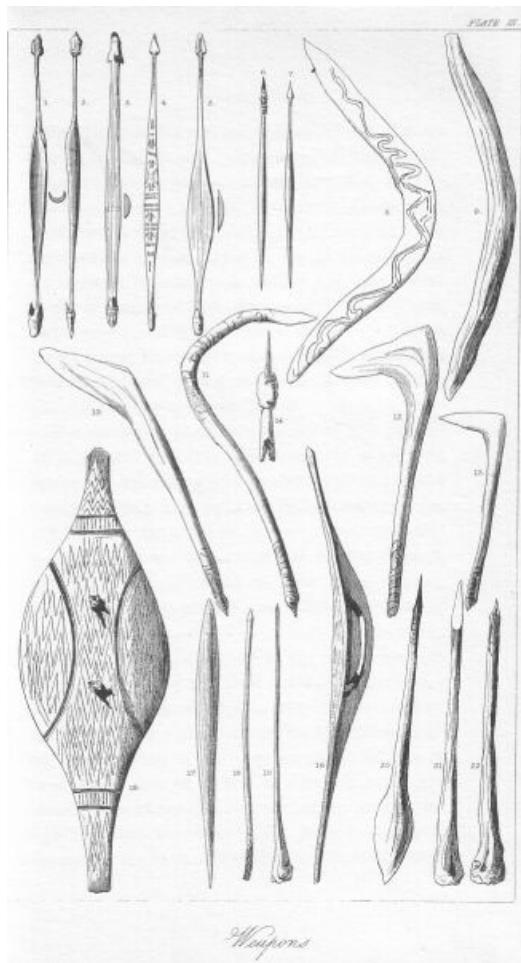


Plate III. Native Weapons

The (katta twirris) or two-edged sword is a formidable weapon, used among the tribes to the north of Adelaide, exclusively for war; another weapon, common among the same tribes, is the katta, a round chisel-pointed stick, about three feet long, and used principally in pitched battles between two individuals.

Another weapon is an angular piece of hard wood, pointed and shaped very much like a miner's pick, the longer or handle-end being rounded and carved, to give a firmer grasp; another dreadful weapon, intended for close combat, is made out of hard wood, from two to three feet long, straight and with the handle rounded and carved for the grasp, which has an immense pointed knob at the end; the bwirri, is also a weapon of hard wood about two feet long, rather slight and merely smoothed in the handle, with a round knob at the extremity, it is principally thrown, and with very great precision; but is more generally used after game than in warfare.

The shield (tar-ram) is made out of the bark or wood of the gum-tree, and varies in shape and device, the ordinary shield is about two or two and a half feet long, from eight to eighteen inches across, and tapering from the middle towards the extremities, two holes are made near the centre, through which a piece of wood is bent for a handle; shields are always carved and painted in time of war.

The implements made use of by the natives are not very numerous, and their general characteristics are nearly the same all over the continent. The native hatchet is made of a very hard greenish-looking stone, rubbed to an edge on either side; it is fixed in the cleft of a stick,

or a branch is doubled round it, and either tied or gummed to prevent its slipping. The throwing sticks have generally a sharp piece of quartz or flint gummed on at the lower end, which is used as a knife or chisel; flints or muscle shells are used for skinning animals, dissecting food, cutting hair, etc.

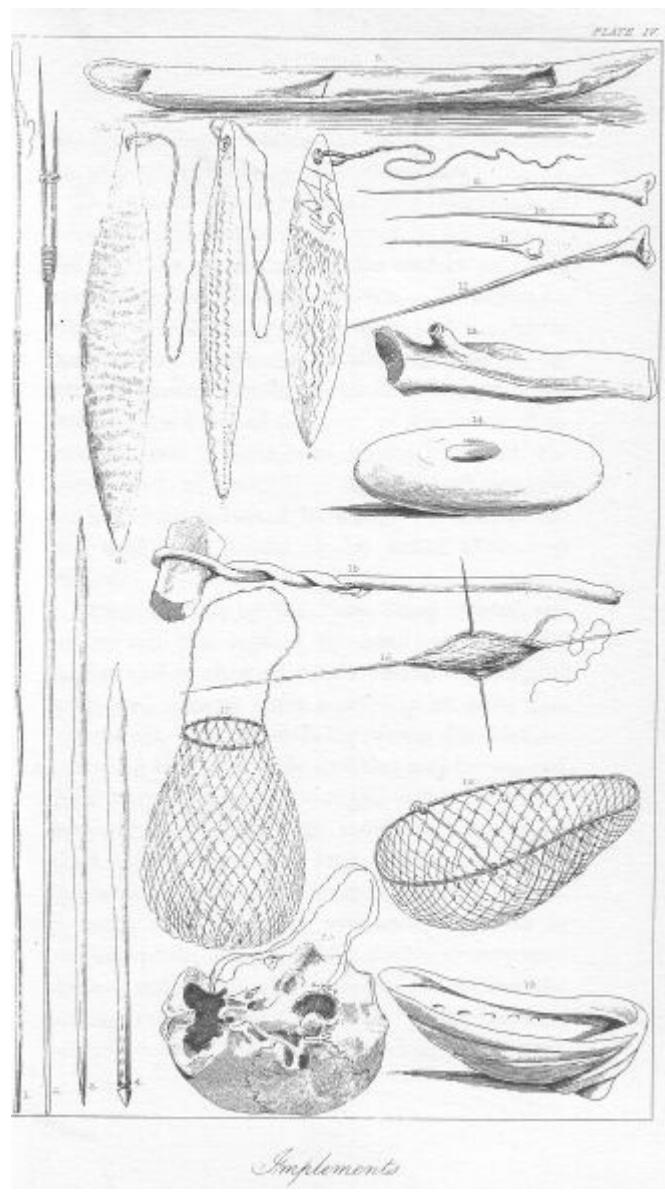


Plate IV. Native Implements

The ngak-ko, a strong chisel-pointed stick, from three to four feet long, is used for dissecting the larger animals and fish, for digging grubs out of the trees, for making holes to get out opossums, etc., for stripping bark, ascending trees, for cutting bark canoes, and a variety of other useful purposes. The rod for noosing ducks, (tat-tat-ko) and other wild fowl, is about sixteen feet long, and consists, in its lower part, for the first ten feet, of hard wood, tapering like an ordinary spear, to this is cemented with resin, a joint of tolerably strong reed about sixteen inches long, at the upper end of this is inserted and cemented with wax, a tapering rod of hard wood, three feet long and very similar to the top joint of a fly-fishing rod, to this is spliced a fine springy and strong top, of about eighteen inches in length, at the end of which is bound a piece of fine strong cord, which works with a running noose upon the tapering end of the instrument. Needles are made from the fibula of the emu or kangaroo, and are pointed at one end by being rubbed on a stone, they are used in sewing as we use a shoemaker's awl, the

hole is bored and the thread put through with the hand; the thread is made of the sinews of the emu and kangaroo. The netting needle is a little round bit of stick or reed, about the size of a lead pencil, round which the string is wound, no mesh is used, the eye and hand enabling the native to net with the utmost regularity, speed, and neatness.

The nets for hunting, for carrying their effects or food, for making belts for the waist, or bandages for the head, are all made from the tendons or fur of animals, or from the fibres of plants. In the former, the sinews of the kangaroo or emu, and the fur of opossums and other similar animals, are used; in the latter, a species of rush, the fibres of the root of the mallow, the fibres of the root of the broad flag-reed, etc. and in some parts of the continent, the fibrous bark of trees. The materials are prepared for use by being soaked in water and carded with the teeth and hands, or by being chewed or rubbed.

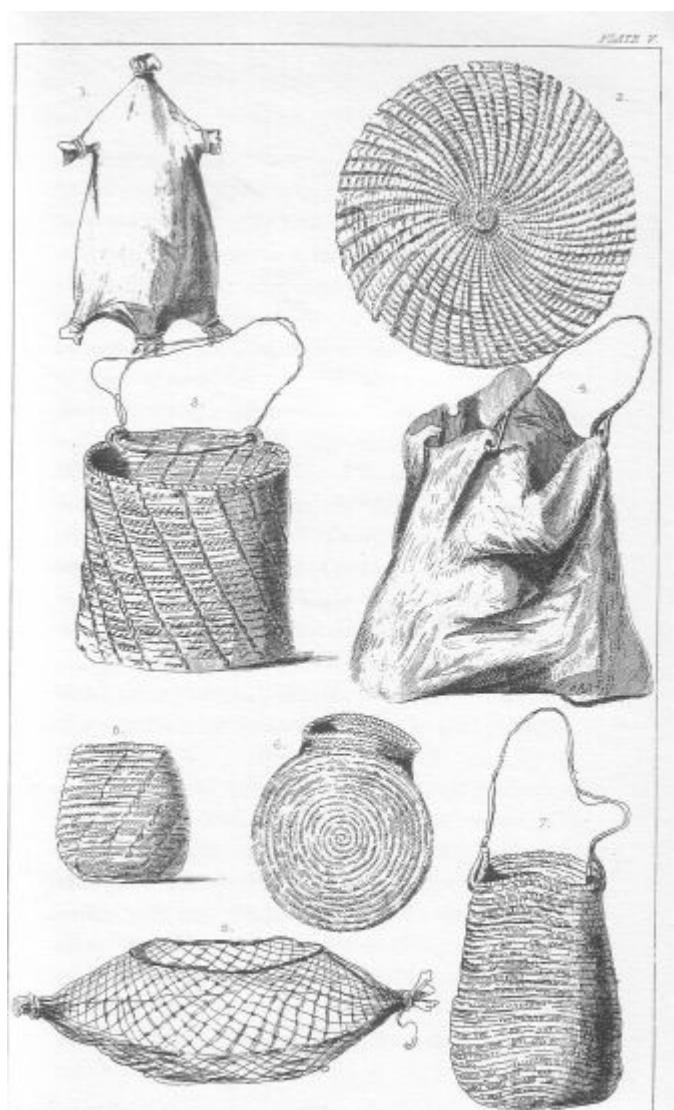


Plate V. Native Works of Industry

String is made by the fibres being twisted, and rubbed with the palm of the hand over the naked thighs, and is often as neatly executed as English whip-cord, though never consisting of more than two strands,—the strands being increased in thickness according to the size of

the cord that may be required. Nets vary in size and strength according to the purposes for which they are required; the duck net (kew-rad-ko) has already been described, as also the kenderanko, or small net for diving for fish, and the taendilly net, for diving with under the rocks for the larger fish; the kenyinki is a net with very small meshes, and set out with a wooden bow, for catching shrimps and other very small fish. There are also, a wharro, a large hoop-net for catching small cray-fish; a lenko, or small net for hanging round the neck, to put muscles, cray-fish, frogs, etc. in; a rocko, or large net bag, used by the women for carrying their worldly effects about with them; the kaar-ge-rum, or net for the waistband; the rad-ko, or fishing net, which is a regular seine for catching fish, about fifty or sixty feet in length, and varying in depth according to the place where it is to be used; the emu or kangaroo net (nunko) is very strong, with meshes from five to six inches square; it is made of cord as thick as a large quill, and its length is from a hundred to a hundred and thirty feet, and depth about five feet when set. The wallabie net is about thirty feet long, of strong cord, and when set about eighteen inches high. The size of the meshes of all the nets depends upon the game to be taken; generally they are small. Neat, and variously striped baskets and mats are made by the women of certain tribes, from rushes, or a broad-leaved description of grass. The kallater is a round basket, wide at the base, and tapering upwards; its size varies. The poola-danooko is a very pretty looking, flat, oval basket, adapted for laying against the back. The poneed-ke is a large, flat, circular mat, worn over the back and shoulders, and when tied by a band round the waist affords a lodging for an infant. Large bags or wallets are also made of kangaroo skins, with the fur outside, and small ones of the skins of lesser animals with the fur inside. Skins are prepared for making cloaks by pegging them tight out upon the ground soon after they are taken off the animal, when dry, cold ashes or dust are thrown in, to absorb any grease that may have exuded. If the weather is damp, or the native is in a hurry, they are pegged out near the fire; after drying, the smaller skins are rubbed with stones to make them flexible, or are scored or ornamented with various devices, cut with a flint or shell on the skin side; the larger skins have their inner layers shaved off by flints, shells, or implements of wood. Opossums, wallabies, young kangaroos, etc. are skinned sometimes by simply making a slit about the head, through which the rest of the body is made to pass; the skins are turned inside out, and the ends of the legs tied up, and are then ready for holding water, and always form part of the baggage of natives who travel much about, or go into badly watered districts. I have seen these skins (lukomb) capable of holding from two to three gallons of water: the fur is always inside. The karko is a small spade of wood, used by the natives north of Adelaide for digging up grubs from the ground. The canoe or "mun" is a large sheet of bark cut from the gum-tree, carefully lowered to the ground, and then heated with fire until it becomes soft and pliable, and can be moulded into form, it is then supported by wooden props, to keep it in shape, until it becomes hard and set, which is in about twenty-four hours, though it is frequently used sooner. On its being launched, sticks or stretchers are placed across each end and in the middle, to prevent the bark from contracting or curling up with exposure to the air. A large canoe will hold seven or eight people easily; it is often twenty feet long. The following is a description of an ordinary one for fishing:—length fifteen feet, width three feet, depth eight inches, formed out of a single sheet of bark, with one end a little narrower than the other and pointing upwards. This end is paddled first; the bottom is nearly flat, and the canoe is so firm, that a person can take hold of one side, and climb into it from the water without upsetting it. It is paddled along with the long pine-spear moo-aroo, described as being used in fishing at night by firelight. In propelling it the native stands near the centre, pushing his moo-aroo against the water, first on one side and then on the other; in shallow water one end of the moo-aroo is placed on the bottom, and the canoe so pushed along. The natives are well acquainted with the use of fire, for hardening the points of their weapons or softening the wood to enable them to bend them. In the former case, the point is charred in the fire, and scraped with a shell or flint to the precise shape required; in the latter, their spears, and other similar weapons, are placed upon hot ashes, and bent into form by pressure. It is a common practice among many of the tribes to grease their weapons and implements with human fat, taken from the omentum, either of enemies who have been killed, or of relations who have died. Spears, and other offensive arms, are supposed to possess additional powers if

thus treated; and nets and other implements for procuring game are imagined to become much more effectual in ensnaring prey. In setting nets, too, the natives have a practice of taking up a handful of water to the mouth, and then squirting it out over the net, in a shower of spray, this they think is a powerful charm to ensure the fish being caught.

There can hardly be said to be any form of government existing among a people who recognize no authority, and where every member of the community is at liberty to act as he likes, except, in so far as he may be influenced by the general opinions or wishes of the tribe, or by that feeling which prompts men, whether in civilised or savage communities to bend to the will of some one or two persons who may have taken a more prominent and leading part than the rest in the duties and avocations of life. Among none of the tribes yet known have chiefs ever been found to be acknowledged, though in all there are always some men who take the lead, and whose opinions and wishes have great weight with the others.

Other things being equal, a man's authority and influence increase among his tribe in proportion to his years. To each stage of life through which he passes is given some additional knowledge or power, and he is privileged to carry an additional number of implements and weapons, as he advances in life. An old grey-headed man generally carries the principal implements and weapons, either for war or sorcery; many of the latter the women and children are never allowed to see, such as pieces of rock-crystal, by which the sorcerer can produce rain, cause blindness, or impart to the waters the power of destroying life, etc.; sacred daggers for causing the death of their enemies by enchantment; the moor-y-um-karr or flat oval piece of wood which is whirled round the camp at nights, and many others of a similar nature.

I have not, however, found that age is invariably productive of influence, unless the individual has previously signalized himself among his people, and taken up a commanding position when youth and strength enabled him to support his pretensions, and unless he be still in full possession of vigour of mind and energy of character, though no longer endowed with personal strength. The grey-head appears to be usually treated with respect as long as the owner is no incumbrance to those around him, but the moment he becomes a drag, every tie is broken, and he is at once cast off to perish. Among many tribes with which I have been acquainted, I have often noticed that though the leading men were generally elderly men from forty-five to sixty years old, they were not always the oldest; they were still in full vigour of body and mind, and men who could take a prominent part in acting as well as counselling. I am inclined, therefore, to think that the degree of estimation in which any native is held by his fellows, or the amount of deference that may be paid to his opinions, will in a great measure depend upon his personal strength, courage, energy, prudence, skill, and other similar qualifications, influenced, perhaps, collaterally by his family connections and the power which they possess.

Each father of a family rules absolutely over his own circle. In his movements and arrangements he is uncontrolled, yet, as a matter of policy, he always informs his fellows where he is going, what he is going to do, how long he will be absent, when he will meet them again, etc. It thus happens that, although a tribe may be dispersed all over their own district in single groups, or some even visiting neighbouring tribes, yet if you meet with any one family they can at once tell you where you will find any other, though the parties themselves may not have met for weeks. Some one or other is always moving about, and thus the news of each other's locality gets rapidly spread among the rest. The principal occupation, indeed, of parties when they meet, is to give and receive information relative to neighbouring families or tribes. In cases of sudden danger or emergency, the scattered groups are rapidly warned or collected by sending young men as messengers, or by raising signal smokes in prominent positions.

In an assembly of the tribe, matters of importance are generally discussed and decided upon, by the elder men, apart from the others. It not unfrequently happens, however, that some discontented individual will loudly and violently harangue the whole tribe; this usually occurs in the evening, and frequently continues for hours together; his object being generally either to reverse some decision that has been come to, to excite them to something they are unwilling to do, or to abuse some one who is absent. Occasionally he is replied to by others, but more frequently allowed uninterrupted to wear himself out, when from sheer exhaustion he is compelled to sit down.

Occasionally the tribe is addressed by its most influential members in the language of admonition or advice, and though at such times a loud tone and strong expressions are made use of, there is rarely any thing amounting to an order or command; the subject is explained, reasons are given for what is advanced, and the result of an opposite course to that suggested, fully pointed out; after this the various members are left to form their own judgments, and to act as they think proper.

In their domestic relations with one another polygamy is practised in its fullest extent. An old man having usually from one to four wives, or as many as he can procure.

The females, and especially the young ones are kept principally among the old men, who barter away their daughters, sisters, or nieces, in exchange for wives for themselves or their sons. Wives are considered the absolute property of the husband, and can be given away, or exchanged, or lent, according to his caprice. A husband is denominated in the Adelaide dialect, *Yongarra, Martanya* (the owner or proprietor of a wife). Female children are betrothed usually from early infancy, and such arrangements are usually adhered to; still in many cases circumstances occur frequently to cause an alteration; but if not, the girls generally go to live with their husbands about the age of twelve, and sometimes even before that. Relatives nearer than cousins are not allowed to marry, and this alliance does not generally take place. Female orphans belong to the nearest male relative, as also does a widow, instead of to the nearest male relative of the husband, as was found to be the case in Western Australia by Captain Grey. Two or three months generally elapse before the widow goes to another husband; but if the wife dies, the man takes another as soon as he can get one. If a woman, having young children, join another tribe, the children go with her; but I am not aware whether they would remain permanently attached to that tribe or not. Brothers often barter their sisters for wives for themselves, but it can only be done with the parents' consent, or after their death. If a wife be stolen, war is always continued until she is given up, or another female in her place.

There is no ceremony connected with the undertaking of marriage. In those cases where I have witnessed the giving away of a wife, the woman was simply ordered by the nearest male relative in whose disposal she was, to take up her "rocko," the bag in which a female carries the effects of her husband, and go to the man's camp to whom she had been given. Marriage is not looked upon as any pledge of chastity, indeed no such virtue is recognised.

[Note 76: Foeminae sese per totam pene vitam prostituunt. Apud plurimas tribus juventutem utriusque sexus sine discrimine concubere in usus est. Si juvenis forte indigenorum coetum quandam in castris manentem adveniat ubi quaevis sit puella innupta, mos est; nocte veniente et cubantibus omnibus, illam ex loco exsurgere et juvenem accedentem cum illo per noctem manere unde in sedem propriam ante diem reddit. Cui foemina sit, eam amicis libenter praebet; si in itinere sit, uxori in castris manenti aliquis ejus supplet ille vires. Advenis ex longinquo accedentibus foeminas ad tempus dare hospitis esse boni judicatur. Viduis et foeminis jam senescentibus saepe in id traditis, quandoque etiam invitis et insciis cognatis, adolescentes utuntur. Puellae tenerae a decimo primum anno, et pueri a decimo tertio vel quarto, inter se miscentur. Senioribus mos est, si forte gentium plurium castra appropinquant, viros noctu huic inde transeuntes, uxoribus alienis uti et in sua castra ex utraque parte mane redire.

Temporis quinetiam certis, machina quaedam ex ligno ad formam ovi facta, sacra et mystica, uam foeminas aspicere haud licitam, decem plus minus uncias longa et circa quatuor lata insculpta ac figuris diversis ornata, et ultimam perforata partem ad longam (plerumque e crinibus humanis textam) inscrendam chordam cui nomen "Mooyumkarr," extra castra in gyrum versata, stridore magno e percusso aere facto, libertatem coeundi juventuti esse tum concessam omnibus indicat. Parentes saepe infantum, viri uxorum quaestum corporum faciunt. In urbe Adelaide panis praemio parvi aut paucorum denariorum meretrices fieri eas libenter cogunt. Facile potest intelligi, amorem inter nuptos vix posse esse grandem, quum omnia quae ad foeminas attinent, hominum arbitrio ordinentur et tanta sexuum societati laxitas, et adolescentes quibus ita multae ardoris explendi dantur occasiones, haud magnopere uxores, nisi ut servas desideratuos.

But little real affection consequently exists between husbands and wives, and young men value a wife principally for her services as a slave; in fact when asked why they are anxious to obtain wives, their usual reply is, that they may get wood, water, and food for them, and carry whatever property they possess. In 1842 the wife of a native in Adelaide, a girl about eighteen, was confined, and recovered slowly; before she was well the tribe removed from the locality, and the husband preferred accompanying them, and left his wife to die, instead of remaining to attend upon her and administer to her wants. When the natives were gone, the girl was removed to the mission station, to receive medical attendance, but eventually died. In the same year an old woman who broke her thigh was left to die, as the tribe did not like the trouble of carrying her about. Parents are treated in the same manner when helpless and infirm. [Note 77 at end of para.] In 1839 I found an aged man left to die, without fire or food, upon a high bare hill beyond the Broughton. In 1843 I found two old women, who had been abandoned in the same way, at the Murray, and although they were taken every care of when discovered, they both died in about a week afterwards. No age is prescribed for matrimony, but young men under twenty-five years of age do not often obtain wives, there are exceptions, however, to this: I have seen occasionally young men of seventeen or eighteen possessing them. When wives are from thirty-five to forty years of age, they are frequently cast off by the husbands, or are given to the younger men in exchange for their sisters or near relatives, if such are at their disposal.

[Note 77: "Practised by the American Indians."—Catlin, vol. i. p. 216.

"The early life of a young woman at all celebrated for beauty is generally one continued series of captivity to different masters, of ghastly wounds, of wanderings in strange families, of rapid flights, of bad treatment from other females amongst whom she is brought a stranger by her captor; and rarely do you see a form of unusual grace and elegance, but it is marked and scarred by the furrows of old wounds; and many a female thus wanders several hundred miles from the home of her infancy, being carried off successively to distant and more distant points."]

Women are often sadly ill-treated by their husbands or friends, in addition to the dreadful life of drudgery, and privation, and hardship they always have to undergo; they are frequently beaten about the head, with waddies, in the most dreadful manner, or speared in the limbs for the most trivial offences. No one takes the part of the weak or the injured, or ever attempts to interfere with the infliction of such severe punishments.

Few women will be found, upon examination, to be free from frightful scars upon the head, or the marks of spear-wounds about the body. I have seen a young woman, who, from the number of these marks, appeared to have been almost riddled with spear wounds. Upon this point Captain Grey remarks, vol. ii. p. 249.

The menses commence to flow among the native females at an earlier age than among Europeans, frequently beginning at about twelve; they are also subject to many irregularities

in their periodical return, arising probably from the kind of life they lead and the nature of the diet upon which they live. I have known cases where this irregularity has extended to three months. Child-bearing does not commence often before the age of sixteen, nor have I ever noticed pregnant women under that age. In inquiries conducted by Mr. Moorhouse among the natives of Adelaide, that gentleman ascertained, that as many as nine children have occasionally been born to one woman; that the average number is about five; but that each mother only reared an average of two. At childbirth, the placenta, which is considered as sacred, is carefully put away from the reach of the dogs as soon as thrown off from the uterus, and the female is up and following her usual avocations a very few hours after the accouchement. Instances have occurred of women sitting up, and asking for food an hour after confinement, though wet with rain, and having very little fire. Two days after it, I have seen a woman walking two or three miles, and going out to look for food in her usual manner. Infanticide is very common, and appears to be practised solely to get rid of the trouble of rearing children, and to enable the woman to follow her husband about in his wanderings, which she frequently could not do if encumbered with a child. The first three or four are often killed; no distinction appears to be made in this case between male or female children. Half-castes appear to be always destroyed.

The nomenclature of the natives is a subject of considerable difficulty, and is at present involved in much obscurity and uncertainty, so many different practices obtaining, and so many changes of name occurring to some individuals during the course of their life. In the Adelaide district, and among the tribes to the north, Mr. Moorhouse has found that numerical names are given to children when first born, in the order of birth, a variation in the termination constituting the distinction of name for male or female, thus:—

IF MALE. IF FEMALE.

The 1st child would be called Kertameru Kertanya

2nd child would be called Warrytya Warriarto

3rd child would be called Kudnutyta Kudnarto

4th child would be called Monaitya Monarto

5th child would be called Milaitya Milarto

6th child would be called Marrutyta Marruarto

7th child would be called Wangutya Wangwarto

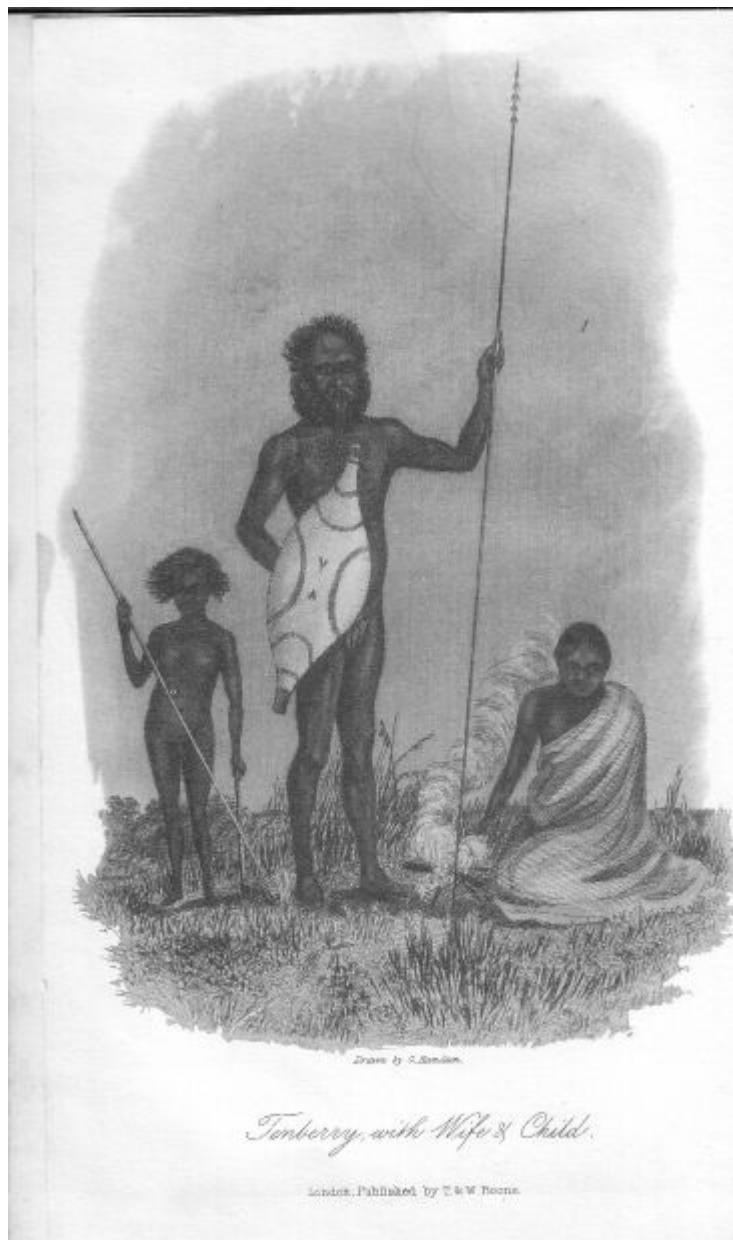
8th child would be called Ngarlaitya Ngarlarto

9th child would be called Pouarna Ngarlarto

These are given at birth; but a short time after another name is added, which is derived from some object in nature, as a plant, animal, or insect. This name continues until after marriage and the birth of the first child, upon which the father takes the name of this child, and has the word binna or spinna, (an adult,) affixed, as Kadli; name of a child, Kadlitpinna, the father of Kadli; the mother is called Kadli ngangki, or mother of Kadli, from ngangki, a female or woman. The names of the father and mother are changed at the birth of every child in the same manner.

At Moorunde, and among many other tribes, I have not found any numerical names to be given at birth, the first name usually being that derived from some object in nature. This is

occasionally changed after marriage and the birth of a child; as among the Adelaide or northern natives, the father taking the name of the child with the affix of imbe or nimbe (implying father), as Kartul, a child's name, Kartulnimbe the father of Kartul, Memparne, a child's name, Memparnimbe the father of Memparne. This paidronymic is not, however, always adhered to in preference to the original name; thus Memparnimbe is as often called by his former name of Tenberry as his paidronymic; he is also called occasionally Worrammo, from his being left-handed. Neither have I found the name of the parent change at the birth of every child; thus Memparnimbe has other children, younger than Memparne, as Warrulan, Timarro, etc. yet he is never called Warrulanimbe, Timarronimbe, etc. The mother's name, similarly to that of the father, is also occasionally altered to that of the child, with the affix of arwer, or emarwer, as Kartulemarwer, the mother of Kartul, Memparnemarwer, the mother of Memparne, yet is the original name of the mother as often used as the paidronymic. Old men are frequently called by the name of the place which belongs to them, with the affix of bookola thus Moorondooyo Bookola is the old man who owns Mooroonde, etc.



Tenberry, with Wife and Child, drawn by G. Hamilton

At other times nicknames are given to natives, and so generally made use of by the others that the proper or original name becomes almost lost. Thus a native named Marloo, from a habit he had of looking about him and saying, "I see, I see," is called Nairkinimbe, or the father of seeing. Another named Ngalle-ngalle is called Eukonimbe, the father of eukodko, from his being very fond of the crayfish of that name, and so on. Other local appellations are given referring to some peculiarity of personal appearance, Parn-gang-gapko, the baldheaded, Towang Makkeroo, the broken-thighed, etc. Others again refer to family bereavements, as Roo ptootarap, a father without children, Parntomakker, a childless mother, Parnko, an orphan, Wirrang, one who has lost a brother, Rockootarap, one whose wife is dead, Thal tarlpipke, an unmarried man, Rartchilock, one who owns a wife, Rang, a widow, Waukerow, an unmarried woman, etc. These are all distinctions, which though readily discoverable by a person tolerably well versed in the dialect, or long resident among the same natives, present many difficulties, and lead to many mistakes, amongst casual inquirers, or those whose pursuits do not keep them long at the place of their inquiries. There are others which are still more difficult to be understood, from the almost utter impossibility of learning (with any reasonable sacrifice of time) the language with sufficient accuracy to enable the inquirer thoroughly to comprehend the meanings of the proper names, and deduce the roots from which they are derived.

Even among the Adelaide tribes, where there appears to be a greater uniformity in the system of nomenclature than I have met with any where else, and where Mr. Moorhouse has devoted more time and attention to the subject than perhaps any other person, there are still difficulties and uncertainties. Thus an Adelaide boy about the age of ten, is called by the name of Koar (the crow), from early infancy, but between ten and twelve, after undergoing one of their ceremonies, the name was changed to Mannara, (which I believe means the crow's nest). According, however, to the usual system adopted, this boy's name ought to have remained Koar, until, by becoming a married man and a father, it gave way to a paidronymic.

There is another subject somewhat analogous to that of nomenclature, and about which still less is known;—that of every native adopting some object in creation as his crest, or tiende. The same thing is noticed by Captain Grey in his narrative (vol. ii. p. 228).

"But as each family adopts some animal or vegetable, as their crest or sign, or KOBONG as they call it, I imagine it more likely, that these have been named after the families, than that the families have been named after them.

"A certain mysterious connection exists between a family and its KOBONG, so that a member of a family will never kill an animal of the species, to which his KOBONG belongs, should he find it asleep; indeed, he always kills it reluctantly, and never without affording it a chance to escape. This arises from the family belief, that some one individual of the species is their nearest friend, to kill whom would be a great crime, and to be carefully avoided. Similarly, a native who has a vegetable for his KOBONG, may not gather it under certain circumstances, and at a particular period of the year."

From the foregoing quotation, it is apparent that very little difference exists in the custom as practised in Western and Southern Australia. In the former, however, there appears to be an unwillingness to destroy the object represented by the kobong or tiende that I have never observed in the latter. But very little appears to be known on this subject at present, as far as regards the reason for assuming the tiende, or its connection with the individual or family it may represent. The same tiende seems to descend from a father to his children; but I have been told occasionally of instances where such has not been the case. There are several striking differences between the customs and habits of the Aborigines of Western Australia, narrated by Captain Grey, and those in force among the tribes I have myself been best acquainted with in Southern or South-eastern Australia. One singular peculiarity is described by Captain Grey.

“One of the most remarkable facts connected with the natives, is that they are divided into certain great families, all the members of which bear the same names, as a family or second name: the principal branches of these families, so far as I have been able to ascertain, are the Ballaroke Tdondarup Ngotak Nagarnook Nogonyuk Mongalung Narrangur.

“But in different districts the members of these families give a local name to the one to which they belong, which is understood in that district, to indicate some particular branch of the principal family. The most common local names are,

Didaroke Gwerrinjoke Maleoke Waddaroke Djekoke Kotejumeno Namyungo Yungaree.

“These family names are common over a great portion of the continent; for instance, on the Western coast, in a tract of country extending between four and five hundred miles in latitude, members of all these families are found. In South Australia, I met a man who said that he belonged to one of them, and Captain Flinders mentions Yungaree, as the name of a native in the Gulf of Carpentaria.

“These family names are perpetuated, and spread through the country, by the operation of two remarkable laws:—

“1st. That children of either sex, always take the family name of their mother.

“2nd. That a man cannot marry a woman of his own family name.”

From this it appears that the natives of that part of the country have in addition to their other ordinary names a family or surname, which is perpetuated through successive generations on the mother's side. This is not the case as far as my observations and inquiries have enabled me to ascertain among the numerous tribes frequenting the Murray river, and Mr. Moorhouse assures me that he has been equally unable to detect any coincidence of the kind among the tribes frequenting the district of Adelaide.

The division, numbers, and names of the various tribes are also subjects of difficulty and uncertainty. As far as my researches have yet extended upon this point, it appears to me, first, that groups of natives have a distinctive or a local appellation, derived from the particular place they belong to, as Barmerara maru, the natives frequenting the lake called Barmera: Moolyoolpero maru, the natives frequenting the lagoon called Moolyoolko, and so on. Secondly, a general or tribal name, as Narwijjerook, a native of the tribe so called, which includes the natives of Barmera and various others in that neighbourhood. Karnbrickolenbola, a native of the tribe so called, and which includes various groups around Mooroonde. Thirdly, it appears that wherever a change occurs in the name of the tribes to which contiguous groups of natives may belong, there is a corresponding change in the dialect or language spoken; thus the Narwij-jerook speak a dialect called Narwijjong, the Karnbrickolenbola tribe the Aiawong dialect, and so on.

In many of these dialects there appears to be little more difference than exists among the counties in England. Such is the case up the course of the Murray from Lake Alexandrina to the Darling; and such Captain Grey found to be the case throughout a great part of Western Australia. In others the dialects are so totally unlike one another, that natives, meeting upon opposite sides of a river, cannot speak to or understand a word of what each other say, except through the medium of a third language, namely that spoken by the natives of the river itself, and which is totally unlike either of the other two.

This is the case at Moorunde, where three different dialects meet, the Yakkumban, or dialect spoken by the Paritke tribe, or natives inhabiting the scrub to the west and north-west of the Murray. The Boraipar or language of the Arkatko tribe, who inhabit the scrub to the east of

the Murray, and the Aiawong or river dialect, extending, with slight variations, from the junction of the Murray and Lake Alexandrina to the Darling.

Chapter V.

CEREMONIES AND SUPERSTITIONS—FORMS OF BURIAL—MOURNING CUSTOMS—RELIGIOUS IDEAS—EMPIRICS, ETC.

The ceremonies and superstitions of the natives are both numerous and involved in much obscurity; indeed it is very questionable if any of them are understood even by themselves. Almost all the tribes impose initiatory rites upon the young, through which they must pass from one stage of life to another, until admitted to the privileges and rights of manhood. These observances differ greatly in different parts of the continent, independently of local or distinctive variations indicative of the tribe to which a native may belong.

Thus at the Gulf of Carpentaria, the rite of circumcision is performed; at Swan River, King George's Sound, and nearly three hundred miles to the eastward of the latter place, no such rite exists. Round the head of the Great Australian Bight, and throughout the Port Lincoln Peninsula, not only is this rite performed, but a still more extraordinary one conjoined with it. [Note 78: "Finditur usque ad urethram a parte infera penis."] Descending the east side of Spencer's and St. Vincent's Gulf, and around the district of Adelaide, the simple rite of circumcision is retained. Proceeding but a little farther to the banks of the Murray, and its neighbourhood, no such ceremony exists, nor have I ever heard of its having been observed any where on the southeastern, or eastern parts of the continent.

So also with respect to tattooing; in one part of the continent it is adopted, in another it is rejected; when it is practised, there are many varieties in the form, number, or arrangement of the scars, distinguishing the different tribes, so that one stranger meeting with another any where in the woods, can at once tell, from the manner in which he is tattooed, the country and tribe to which he belongs, if not very remote. In the Adelaide district, Mr. Moorhouse has observed, that there are five stages to be passed through, before the native attains the rank of a bourka, or full grown man. The first is, that from birth to the tenth year, when he is initiated into the second, or Wilya kundarti, by being covered with blood, drawn from the arm of an adult; he is then allowed to carry a wirri for killing birds, and a small wooden spade (karko) for digging grubs out of the ground. At from twelve to fourteen, the third stage is entered, by having the ceremony of circumcision performed, which takes place in the following manner. Early in the morning, the boys to be circumcised are seized from behind, and a bandage is fastened over the eyes of each; they are then led away from the presence of the women and children to a distance of half a mile, when they are laid on the ground, and covered with a cloak, or skin, so as not to see what is passing amongst the adults, who proceed with the ceremony. Three of them now commence limping, and making a peculiar groaning noise, until they arrive opposite one of the boys, upon whom they seize. The individual laid hold of, jumps up, and runs off at full speed, as if he intended to escape; the three, before occupied in limping and groaning, run with him to prevent this, and after three or four races, all four run over the place where the boys are covered up, and the boy, who had been trying to escape, is caught, and laid down near the other boys, and covered with dust. He is now supposed to be in a state of enchantment, from which he is aroused by being lifted up by the ears, at the same time that loud noises are made into them. All the men now, except the sick, form themselves into a circle, and keep walking round in single file, the first individual having a katto, or long stick held down his back. After a few circles this is given to another; a short rest is taken, and then the whole party rise, except the sick, the inspired men, or sorcerers, and those upon whom the operation is to be performed, and proceed to a short distance, the man with the katto down his back leading. When assembled, they form into a line, and at word of command commence the peculiar stamping and groaning, beginning at the far end of the line, and gradually advancing towards the other. During several rounds of this noise, they advance at each, a little nearer to the boys, who when they are very near, have their eyes uncovered that they may see the men approaching. The first man who held the katto, fastens it in the ground, and all the others coming up, take hold of it, and fall down into a heap. The boys are then

thrown upon the heap of men, and the operation is performed by men who are supposed to be inspired, or sorcerers. Immediately after the operation, the boys are taken away from the presence of all females, and kept upon a vegetable diet until recovered from its effects. The head is covered with grease, and red ochre, with a bandage passed round it, and is ornamented with tufts of feathers. The Yudna, or pubic covering, is worn by the circumcised for some months after the operation.

The fourth stage (Wilyaru) is entered about the age of twenty, when the back, shoulders, arms and chest, are tattooed. He is called ngulte, at the time of the operation; yellambambettu, when the incisions have begun to discharge pus; tarkange, when the sores are just healed; mangkauitya, at the time the cuts begin to rise; and bartamu, when the scars are at their highest elevation. Each tribe has a distinctive mode of making their incisions. Some have scars running completely across the chest, from one axillar to the other, whilst others have merely dotted lines; some have circles and semicircles formed on the apex of the shoulder, others small dots only.

The fifth stage is bourka or full man, and is only attained when the individual is getting grey-headed.

Among the Murray natives and contiguous tribes, instead of the rite of circumcision, a ceremony called wharepin, is performed upon youths from fourteen to sixteen. Early in the morning some of the male friends of the boy about to be operated upon, go behind him to seize him, upon which he sets off running as hard as he can, as if to escape; but being followed by his pursuers is soon captured and thrown down; he is then raised up and surrounded by several natives, who hold him and smear him from head to foot, with red ochre and grease; during this part of the ceremony, a band of elderly women, generally the mother and other near relatives, surround the group, crying or lamenting, and lacerating their thighs and backs with shells or flints, until the blood streams down. When well ochred all over, the novice is led away by another native, apart from the rest of the tribe, or if there are more than one, they stand together linked hand in hand, and when tired sit down upon bunches of green boughs brought for that purpose, for they are neither allowed to sit on the ground, nor to have any clothing on; and when they move about they always carry a bunch of green boughs in each hand.

They are now ready for the ceremony, which is usually performed by influential natives of distant tribes, and which generally takes place at the meetings of these tribes, as in the case of the meeting of the Moorunde natives, and the Nar-wij-jerook tribe described in Chapter II.P.220. On that occasion, there were three Moorunde natives to be operated upon. As soon as the ceremonial of the meeting of the tribes had been gone through, as already described, the Nar-wij-jerook natives retired about a hundred yards, and sat down on the ground, the Moorunde people remaining standing. The three spears which had little nets attached to them, and which had been brought down by the Nar-wij-jerooks, were now advanced in front of that tribe, still seated and stuck in a row in the ground. Three men then got up and seated themselves at the foot of the three spears, with their legs crossed. Two other natives then went over to the Moorunde people, to where the three novices stood shaking and trembling, like criminals waiting for their punishment, seizing them by the legs and shoulders, and carefully lifting them from the ground, they carried each in turn, and laid them on their backs at full length upon green boughs, spread upon the ground in front of the three men sitting by the spears, so that the head of each rested on the lap of one of the three. From the moment of their being seized, they resolutely closed their eyes, and pretended to be in a deep trance until the whole was over. When all three novices had been laid in their proper position, cloaks were thrown over them, but leaving the face exposed, and a Nar-wij-jerook coming to the side of each, carefully lifted up a portion of the covering and commenced plucking the hair from the pubes. At intervals, the operators were relieved by others of both sexes, and of various ages; little children under ten, were sometimes but not frequently officiating. When all the hair had

been pulled out, that belonging to each native was carefully rolled up in green boughs, the three lots being put together, and given to one of the wise or inspired men to be put properly away; bunches of green boughs were now placed under each arm of the boys as also in their hands, after which several natives took hold of them, and raised them suddenly and simultaneously to their feet, whilst a loud gutteral Whaugh was uttered by the other natives around. They were then disenchanted and the ceremony was over, but for some time afterwards, the initiated are obliged to sleep away from the camp, and are not allowed to see the women; their heads and bodies are kept smeared with red ochre and grease, and tufts of feathers and kangaroo teeth are worn tied to the hair in front. One of the most singular circumstances connected with this ceremony, is that the natives who have officiated never afterwards mention the name of the young men, nor do the latter ever mention the names of the individuals who have operated upon them; should the name of either be accidentally mentioned in the presence of the other, they are greatly annoyed, and at once put the hand up to the mouth to signify that it must not be spoken. It is thus often very difficult to find out the names of particular natives, and strangers would make many mistakes, imagining that they were putting down the name, when in reality they were marking some phrase, signifying that his name could not be mentioned by the one applied to. They have no objection to meet each other after the ceremony, nor do they decline speaking, but there is this peculiarity in their conduct that if one gives food, or any thing else to the other, it is either laid on the ground for him to take, or is given through the intervention of a third person, in the gentlest and mildest manner possible, whereas to another native it would be jerked, perhaps much in the same way that a bone is thrown to a dog. There are other instances in which the names of natives are never allowed to be spoken, as those of a father or mother-in-law, of a son-in-law and some cases arising from a connection with each other's wives. In speaking, therefore, of one another, or introducing persons to distant natives, a very round about way of describing them has often to be adopted, yet so intimately are neighbouring tribes acquainted with the peculiar relations subsisting between the members of each, that there is rarely any difficulty in comprehending who the individual is that is alluded to. Among the Adelaide tribes, there is no circumstance but death that makes them unwilling to mention the name of any of their acquaintances, and this cause of unwillingness I believe extends equally all over the continent.

The ceremony of tattooing is practised among the tribes of the Murray and its neighbourhood with great circumstantial variety. Some are tattooed all over the back or breast in rows, some only one half of each or of one, some are only dotted, others have rings or semicircles round the upper part of the arms and some are tattooed on the belly, etc.

Many tribes I have met with in different parts of Australia, have no tattooing at all, others are marked on the breast by singular looking scars, occupying a space of six or eight inches each way upon the chest, these are called "renditch" in the Murray dialect, and are made by fire; but I have never been able to obtain any satisfactory information respecting them. These scars are confined to particular tribes whom I have only met with occasionally, and for a period which did not allow me the opportunity of making much inquiry into their origin.

At Encounter Bay, instead of plucking out the hair of the pubes, the incipient beard is pulled out by the roots, and the youth, as at the Murray, is smeared from head to foot with red ochre and grease.

Among the females the only ceremony of importance that I am aware of is that of tattooing the back, a long and very painful operation. [Note 79 at end of para.] The method of performing the operation is as follows: the person whose back is to be tattooed is taken out early in the morning and squatted on the ground with her back towards the operator (always a male), and her head bent down between the knees of a strong old woman who is sitting on the ground for that purpose; the back is thus presented in the best position to the operator, and the girl, as long as her head is kept firmly in its position, cannot possibly arise until all is over.

The man who performs the ceremony then commences by taking hold of a fold of the flesh on the girl's right side, just above the breech, with his left hand, whilst with his right he holds a piece of flint or shell, and cuts perpendicular gashes an inch long, three-sixteenths of an inch deep, and about half an inch apart, in horizontal lines from right to left quite across the back, the rows being half an inch or three-quarters distant from each other.

[Note 79: *Hoc plerumque menstruis jam primum venientibus factum est: saepe autem puellis propter timorem statum suam celantibus, aut aliqua alia ex causa, opus quod tempore menstruali fieri prorsus necessarium est, in proxima differtur.*]

This is carried up the whole way from where he commences to the shoulders, and when freshly done, presents one of the most dreadful spectacles imaginable, the blood gushes out in torrents, and though frequently wiped away with grass by some of the women present, is scarcely removed before the crimson stream flows as profusely as ever. During the time of the ceremony the mother and other female relations lament and mourn, whilst they lacerate their bodies with shells. When the incisions are all made, grass or boughs are warmed at the fire, to wipe off the blood. The whole scene is most revolting and disgusting; the ground near where the poor creature sits is saturated with blood, and the whole back is one mass of coagulated gore. In one case, where I saw this operation performed upon a girl belonging to the Paritke tribe, she seemed to suffer much pain. At first, until nearly a row of scars had been made across the lower part of the back, she bore the operation well, but as it proceeded, her cries were piteous and unceasing, and before it was concluded, they became the most heart-rending screams of agony. From the position in which she was held, however, by the old woman on the ground (and who, by the way, was her mother,) it was impossible for her to stir or escape; indeed, had she attempted it, she would probably have been most cruelly beaten in addition. The ceremony occupied three-quarters of an hour, but it was two hours before the wounds had ceased to bleed, and even then, the dried blood was not washed off. Two kangaroo teeth, and a tuft of emu feathers were tied to the girl's hair, and she was smeared over with grease and red ochre, but was still forbidden to touch food until the morning.

Many weeks elapse before the wounds heal, and the inconveniences attending them are removed.

In another case that I saw, the girl bore the operation most stoically, until about two-thirds over, when she could stand it no longer, but screaming out in agony, applied her teeth and nails with such good effect to the thighs of the old lady who held her down, that the latter was compelled to release her grasp, and the poor girl got up, vowing she would not have another incision made. Of course all resistance would have been futile, or probably have only brought down a fearful chastisement upon her if she had been alone with her tribe in the bush; but she took advantage of my presence, and escaped with nearly one-third of the incisions deficient. At this ceremony many other natives of both sexes, and of all ages were standing looking on; but so little did they commiserate the poor creature's sufferings, that the degree of her pain only seemed to be the measure of their laughter and merriment.

The girls, however, are always anxious to have this ceremony performed, as a well tattooed back is considered a great addition to their other charms, and whenever I have offered to protect them from the cruelty of their tribe for refusing to submit to it, they have invariably preferred submitting to the operation.

The only other ceremonies undergone by the females, are those of having the belly or arms tattooed, and of having the hair plucked from the pubes after the death of a child, and sometimes from other causes.

In the mode of disposing of the dead, and the ceremonials attending it, there is a difference in almost every tribe. Among the Adelaide natives as soon as a person dies, a loud wailing cry is

raised by the relations and friends. The body is immediately wrapped up in the skin or clothing worn during life, and in the course of a day or two, it is placed upon the wirkatti or bier, which is made of branches crossed so as to form the radii of a circle, an examination is then entered upon as to the cause of death, in the following manner. The bier is carried upon the shoulders of five or six persons, over places where the deceased had been living; whilst this is going on, a person is placed under the bier, professedly in conversation with the deceased. He asks, what person killed you? If the corpse say no one, the inquest ceases; but if it states that some person has, the bier moves round, the corpse is said to produce the motion, influenced by kuingo (a fabulous personification of death). If the alleged murderer be present, the bier is carried round by this influence, and one of the branches made to touch him. Upon this a battle is sure to ensue either immediately, or in the course of a day or two.

At the time of burial the body is removed from the bier, and deposited, with the head to the west, in a grave from four to six feet deep. Children under four years are not buried for some months after death. They are carefully wrapped up, carried upon the back of the mother by day, and used as a pillow by night, until they become quite dry and mummy-like, after which they are buried, but the ceremony is not known to Mr. Moorhouse.

In the Encounter Bay neighbourhood, four modes of disposing of the dead obtain, according to Mr. Meyer:—old persons are buried; middle-aged persons are placed in a tree, the hands and knees being brought nearly to the chin, all the openings of the body, as mouth, nose, ears, etc. being previously sewn up, and the corpse covered with mats, pieces of old cloth, nets, etc. The corpse being placed in the tree, a fire is made underneath, around which the friends and relatives of the deceased sit, and make lamentations. In this situation the body remains, unless removed by some hostile tribe, until the flesh is completely wasted away, after which the skull is taken by the nearest relative for a drinking cup.

The third mode is to place the corpse in a sitting posture, without any covering, the face being turned to the eastward, until dried by the sun, after which it is placed in a tree. This mode is adopted with those to whose memory it is intended to shew some respect. The fourth method is to burn the body; but this is only practised in the case of still-born children, or such as die shortly after birth.

Another method practised upon Lake Alexandrina, is to construct a platform [Note 80 at end of para.], or bier upon high poles of pine, put upright in the ground upon which the body is placed, bandages being first put round the forehead, and over the eyes, and tied behind. A bone is stuck through the nose, the fingers are folded in the palm of the hand, and the fist is tied with nets, the ends of which are fastened about a yard from the hands; the legs are put crossing each other.

[Note 80: "They often deposit their dead on trees and on scaffolds." —Catlin's AMERICAN INDIANS, vol. ii. p. 10—vide also vol. i. p. 89]



Mode of disposing of the Dead of the Lower Murray

The lamentations are raised by the natives around, fires are made below, so that the smoke may ascend over the corpse, and the mourners usually remain encamped about the place for a great length of time, or until the body is thoroughly dry, after which they leave it. Mr. Schurman says, "At Port Lincoln, after the body is put in a grave, and a little earth is thrown on it; the natives place a number of sticks across its mouth, over which they spread grass or bushes to prevent the remaining earth from falling down, so that an empty space of about three feet in depth is left between the body and the top earth."

At the Flinders river (Gulf of Carpentaria), Captain Stokes observes, "At the upper part of Flinders river, a corpse was found lodged in the branches of a tree, some twenty feet high from the ground; it had three coverings, first, one of bark, then a net, and outside of all a layer of sticks."

On the Murray river, and among the contiguous tribes, many differences occur in the forms of burial adopted by the various tribes. Still-born children are buried immediately. Infants not weaned are carried about by the mother for some months, well wrapped up, and when thoroughly dry, are put into nets or bags, and deposited in the hollows of trees, or buried. Children and young people are buried as soon as practicable after death, and a spearing match generally ensues.

Old people are also buried without unnecessary delay. I have even seen a man in the prime of life all ready placed upon the bier before he was dead, and the mourners and others waiting to convey him to his long home, as soon as the breath departed.

In the case of a middle-aged, or an old man, the spearing and fighting contingent upon a death is always greater than for younger natives. The burial rites in some tribes assimilate to those practised near Adelaide; in others I have witnessed the following ceremony:—The grave being dug, the body was laid out near it, on a triangular bier (birri), stretched straight on the back, enveloped in cloths and skins, rolled round and corded close, and with the head to the eastward; around the bier were many women, relations of the deceased, wailing and lamenting bitterly, and lacerating their thighs, backs, and breasts, with shells or flint, until the blood flowed copiously from the gashes. The males of the tribe were standing around in a

circle, with their weapons in their hands, and the stranger tribes near them, in a similar position, imparting to the whole a solemn and military kind of appearance. After this had continued for some time, the male relatives closed in around the bier, the mourning women renewed their lamentations in a louder tone, and two male relatives stepped up to the bier, and stood across the body, one at the head, and one at the foot, facing each other.

Having cut above the abdomen the strings binding the cloths which were wound round the body, they proceeded to cut a slit of about ten inches long, through the swathing cloths above the belly; through this opening, they removed the arms, which appeared to have been crossed there, laying them down by the sides, inside the wrappings (for no part was unwound); having warmed a handful of green boughs over a fire, they thrust them in through the opening in the cloths, upon the naked belly of the corpse; after a little while these were removed, and one of their sorcerers made an incision of about eight inches long in the abdomen. Having pulled out the entrails and peritoneum, they were turned over, and carefully examined, whilst the women kept wailing and cutting [Note 81 at end of para.] themselves more violently than before, and even the men themselves lamented aloud. When this had been continued for some time, a portion of the omentum was cut off, wrapped in green leaves, and then put carefully away in a bag. The entrails were now replaced, a handful or two of green leaves thrust in above them, the cloths replaced, and the body again bound up ready for interment.

[Note 81: Also an American custom.—Catlin, vol. i. p. 90. Lacerating the flesh at death was expressly forbidden in the Jewish dispensation. It is practised also in New Zealand.—Vide Dieffenbach.]

A relative of the deceased now jumped up, with his weapons, violently excited, and apparently with the intention of spearing some one; but he was at once restrained by his friends, who informed me that the investigation had satisfied them that the man had not died through the agency of sorcery; if he had, it is imagined that a cicatrice would have been found upon the omentum. Two men now got into the grave, spread a cloth in the bottom, and over that green boughs. Other natives turned the bier round, and lifting up the body, gave it to the two in the grave to lay in its proper position, which was quite horizontal, and with the head to the west [Note 82 at end of para.], the grave being dug east and west: green boughs were now thrown thickly into it, and earth was pushed in by the bystanders with their feet, until a mound had been raised some height above the ground. All was now over, and the natives began to disperse, upon which the wild and piercing wail of the mourners became redoubled.

[Note 82: This appears to be a very general custom, and to be of Eastern origin. Catlin describes it as always being attended to at the disposal of the dead by the American Indians. In South Africa, however, Moffat states (p. 307), "that the corpse is put exactly facing the north."]

Upon the mounds, or tumuli, over the graves, huts of bark, or boughs, are generally erected to shelter the dead from the rain; they are also frequently wound round with netting. Many graves being usually in one vicinity, and an elevated dry place being selected, the cemeteries often present a picturesque appearance. Graves are frequently visited by the women at intervals, for some months, and at such times the wail is renewed, and their bodies lacerated as at the interment. At Boga Lake, I saw a grave with a very neat hut of reeds made over it, surmounted by netting, and having a long curious serpentine double trench, of a few inches deep, surrounding it; possibly it might have been the burial place of the native mentioned by Major Mitchell, as having been shot by his black, Piper, at that lake.

Nets, but not implements, are sometimes buried with the natives; nor do the survivors ever like to use a net that has belonged to a man who is dead.

There are not any ceremonies attending the burial of young children; and the male relatives often neglect to attend at all, leaving it altogether to the women.

The natives have not much dread of going near to graves, and care little for keeping them in order, or preventing the bones of their friends from being scattered on the surface of the earth. I have frequently seen them handling them, or kicking them with the foot with great indifference. On one occasion when out with an old native looking for horses before it was daylight, I came to a grave of no very old date, and where the boughs and bushes built over in the form of a hut were still remaining undisturbed; the weather was extremely cold, and the old man did not hesitate to ask me to pull down the boughs to make a fire, but would not do it himself.

On another occasion when a poor old woman had been deserted by the natives of Moorunde, and died a few days after being brought up to the station, I had great difficulty in getting the other natives to bury her, they would on no account touch the body; but after digging a hole, they got a long wiry branch of a tree, and one man taking hold of each end they bent the middle round the old woman's neck, and thus dragged her along the ground and threw her into the pit like a dog, all the time violently and continually spitting out in every direction to ward off, as they said, the infection.

[Note 83: "He tied a thong to her leg, avoiding the touch of that form which gave him birth, dragged the corpse to some bushes, and left the thong because it had been in contact with the body of his mother." —Moffat's South Africa, p. 306.]

Sometimes it happens that when a death occurs, the nearest grown up male relative, whose duty it would be to take the principal part in the ceremonies, or inflict punishment if evil agency is suspected to have caused the death, may be absent. In this case he would have to discharge these duties upon the first occasion of his meeting with the supposed aggressors. The following is an instance which I witnessed.

A relative of Tenberry, one of the principal natives of the Murray, had died when he was absent, and the son of the deceased was too young to revenge the sorcery which it was imagined had caused his father's death, it therefore became Tenberry's duty to do this upon the first occasion that offered. I was with him when the parties first came into the neighbourhood, and I witnessed the proceedings. Notice having been sent by Tenberry the evening before, to warn them to be ready, I accompanied him early in the morning towards the encampment of the natives, situated in a hollow near the water; when within about a hundred yards we saw from the rise all the natives seated below us in the valley. Tenberry now halted, and having taken a hasty survey of the group hung down his head upon his breast and raised a low mournful lamentation; after a time it ceased, and the wail was at once replied to and continued by women's voices in the camp: he now hastily went down to the camp still uttering his lamentations, and the whole body rose at his approach, and formed a large open circle around him. The natives who were supposed to have caused the death of his friend, formed a part of the circle and were armed with spears; behind them stood the orphan son of the deceased, probably in the light of an accuser; and behind the son were the widows, wailing and lamenting bitterly.

After taking the centre of the circle, Tenberry called for a spear, but no one offered one, he therefore took a long one from a native in the ring, who had evidently brought it for that purpose and yielded it unresistingly. Pacing with this weapon furiously up and down the circle, he advanced and retreated before the accused, brandishing the spear at them, and alternately threatening and wailing. No one replied, but the melancholy dirge was still kept up by the widows in the rear.

After sufficiently exciting himself in this manner for some time, he advanced with uplifted spear, and successively repeating his blows speared four or five persons among the accused natives in the left arm, each of them pushing forward his arm unflinchingly for the blow as he advanced upon them. Tenberry now again hung down his head and took up his lamentation for a short time, after which he paced about rapidly, vehemently haranguing, and violently gesticulating, and concluded by ordering all the natives present to separate their camps, and each tribe to make their own apart.

Mourning is performed by the men by cutting their beards [Note 84 at end of para.] and hair, and daubing the head and breast with a white pigment; among the women, by cutting and burning the hair close off [Note 85 at end of para.] to the head and plastering themselves with pipe-clay. In some cases, hot ashes are put upon the head to singe the hair to its very roots, and they then literally weep "in dust and ashes." Among some of the Murray tribes, a mourning cap is worn by the women, made two or three inches thick of carbonate of lime. It is moulded to the head when moist around a piece of net work; the weight is eight pounds and a half. (Pl. 1, fig. 17.)

[Note 84: The custom among the Australians of putting dust or ashes on the head, of shaving the head, of clipping the beard, and of lacerating the body at death or in sign of mourning, appears very similar to the practices among the Israelites in the time of Moses. Vide Leviticus xix. 27, 28; Leviticus xxi. 5; Jeremiah xiviii. 30, 31, 32; Revelations xviii. 19, etc.]

[Note 85: The women among the American Indians also cut off the hair close to the head as a sign of mourning.—Vide Catlin, vol. i.]

The lamentations for the dead do not terminate with the burial; frequently they are renewed at intervals by the women, during late hours of the night, or some hours before day-break in the morning. Piercingly as those cries strike upon the traveller in the lonely woods, if raised suddenly, or very near him, yet mellowed by distance they are soothing and pleasing, awakening a train of thoughts and feelings, which, though sad and solemn, are yet such as the mind sometimes delights to indulge in. The names of the dead are never repeated by the natives among themselves, and it is a very difficult matter for a European to get them to break through this custom, nor will they do it in the presence of other natives. In cases where the name of a native has been that of some bird or animal of almost daily recurrence, a new name is given to the object, and adopted in the language of the tribe. Thus at Moorunde, a favourite son of the native Tenberry was called Torpool, or the Teal; upon the child's death the appellation of tilquaitch was given to the teal, and that of torpool altogether dropped among the Moorunde tribe.

The natives of New Holland, as far as yet can be ascertained, have no religious belief or ceremonies. A Deity, or great First Cause, can hardly be said to be acknowledged, and certainly is not worshipped by this people, who ascribe the creation to very inefficient causes. They state that some things called themselves into existence, and had the property of creating others. But upon all subjects of this nature their ideas are indistinct and indefinite, as they are not naturally a reasoning people, and by no means given to the investigation of causes or their effects; hence, if you inquire why they use such and such ceremonies, they reply, our fathers did so, and we do it; or why they believe so and so, our fathers told us it was so. [Note 86 at end of para.] They are not fond of entering upon abstruse subjects, and when they are induced to do it, it is more than possible, from our imperfect acquaintance with their language, and total ignorance of the character and bent of their thoughts upon such points, that we are very likely to misunderstand and misrepresent their real opinions. It appears to me that different tribes give a different account of their belief, but all generally so absurd, so vague, unsatisfactory, and contradictory, that it is impossible at present to say with any certainty what they really believe, or whether they have any independent belief at all. Mr. Moorhouse, who has taken great pains in his inquiries among the natives around Adelaide upon questions

of this nature, states that they believe in a Soul or Spirit (itpitukutya), separate and distinct altogether from the body, which at death goes to the west, to a large pit, where the souls of all men go. When all are dead, the souls will return to their former place of residence, go to the graves of their forsaken bodies, and inquire, are these the bodies that we formerly inhabited? The bodies will reply, "we are not dead, but still living." The souls and bodies will not be re-united; the former will live in trees during the day, and at night alight on the ground, and eat grubs, lizards, frogs, and kangaroo rats, but not vegetable food of any description. The souls are never again to die, but will remain about the size of a boy eight years old.

[Note 86: "For that practice, they are, as far as I could learn, unable to give any other reason than that of its being the custom of their forefathers which they are therefore bound to follow."—Burchell's Bichuana tribes, vol. ii. p. 531.]

The account given me by some of the natives of the Murray of the origin of the creation, is, that there are four individuals living up among the clouds, called Nooreele, a father and his three male children, but there is no mother. The father is all-powerful, and of benevolent character. He made the earth, trees, waters, etc., gave names to every thing and place, placed the natives in their different districts, telling each tribe that they were to inhabit such and such localities, and were to speak such and such a language. It is said that he brought the natives originally from some place over the waters to the eastward. The Nooreele never die, and the souls (ludko, literally a shadow) of dead natives will go up and join them in the skies, and will never die again. Other tribes of natives give an account of a serpent of immense size, and inhabiting high rocky mountains, which, they say, produced creation by a blow of his tail. But their ideas and descriptions are too incongruous and unintelligible to deduce any definite or connected story from them.

All tribes of natives appear to dread evil spirits, having the appearance of Blacks (called in the Murray dialect Tou, in that of Adelaide Kuinyo). They fly about at nights through the air, break down branches of trees, pass simultaneously from one place to another, and attack all natives that come in their way, dragging such as they can catch after them. Fire [Note 87 at end of para.] appears to have considerable effect in keeping these monsters away, and a native will rarely stir a yard by night, except in moonlight, without carrying a fire-stick. Under any circumstances they do not like moving about in the dark, and it is with the greatest difficulty that they are ever induced to go singly from one station to another, a mile or two distant, after night-fall. Notwithstanding this dread of they don't know exactly what, the natives do not let their fears prevent them moving about after dark, if any object is to be gained, or if several of them are together. By moonlight they are in the habit of travelling from one place to another, as well as of going out to hunt opossums.

[Note 87: Fire is produced by the friction of two pieces of wood or stick—generally the dry flower-stem of the Xanthorrea. The natives, however, usually carry a lighted piece of wood about with them, and do not often let it go out.]

Anything that is extraordinary or unusual, is a subject of great dread to the natives: of this I had a singular instance at Moorunde. In March, 1843, I had a little boy living with me by his father's permission, whilst the old man went up the river with the other natives to hunt and fish. On the evening of the 2nd of March a large comet was visible to the westward, and became brighter and more distinct every succeeding night. On the 5th I had a visit from the father of the little boy who was living with me, to demand his son; he had come down the river post haste for that purpose, as soon as he saw the comet, which he assured me was the harbinger of all kinds of calamities, and more especially to the white people. It was to overthrow Adelaide, destroy all Europeans and their houses, and then taking a course up the Murray, and past the Rufus, do irreparable damage to whatever or whoever came in its way. It was sent, he said, by the northern natives, who were powerful sorcerers, and to revenge the confinement of one of the principal men of their tribe, who was then in Adelaide gaol,

charged with assaulting a shepherd; and he urged me by all means to hurry off to town as quickly as I could, to procure the man's release, so that if possible the evil might be averted. No explanation gave him the least satisfaction, he was in such a state of apprehension and excitement, and he finally marched off with the little boy, saying, that although by no means safe even with him, yet he would be in less danger than if left with me.

All natives of Australia believe in sorcery and witchcraft on the part of certain of their own tribe, or of others. To enable them to become sorcerers, certain rites must be undergone, which vary among the different tribes. Around Adelaide they have at one period to eat the flesh of young children, and at another that of an old man, but it does not appear that they partake more than once in their life of each kind. When initiated, these men possess extensive powers, they can cure or cause diseases, can produce or dissipate rain [Note 88 at end of para.], wind, hail, thunder, etc. They have many sacred implements or relics, which are for the most part carefully kept concealed from the eyes of all, but especially from the women, such as, pieces of rock crystal, said to have been extracted by them from individuals who were suffering under the withering influence of some hostile sorcerers; the pringurru, a sacred piece of bone (used sometimes for bleeding), etc. The latter, if burned to ashes in the fire, possesses mortiferous influence over enemies. If two tribes are at war, and one of either happens to fall sick, it is believed that the sickness has been produced by a sorcerer of the opposite tribe, and should the pringurru have been burnt, death must necessarily follow.

[Note 88: Also an American superstition.—Vide Catlin, vol.i.p. 134. "Sorcerers or rain makers, for both offices are generally assumed by one individual."—Moffat's South Africa, p. 305.]

As all internal pains are attributed to witchcraft, sorcerers possess the power of relieving or curing them. Sometimes the mouth is applied to the surface where the pain is seated, the blood is sucked out, and a bunch of green leaves applied to the part; besides the blood, which is derived from the gums of the sorcerer, a bone is sometimes put out of the mouth, and declared to have been procured from the diseased part; on other occasions the disease is drawn out in an invisible form, and burnt in the fire, or thrown into the water; at others the patient is stretched upon the ground, whilst another person presses with his feet or hands upon the diseased part, or cold water is sprinkled over, and green leaves used as before. There are few complaints that the natives do not attempt to cure, either by charms or by specific applications: of the latter a very singular one is the appliance personally of the urine from a female—a very general remedy, and considered a sovereign one for most disorders. Bandages are often applied round the ankles, legs, arms, wrists, etc. sufficiently tight to impede circulation; suction is applied to the bites of snakes, and is also made use of by their doctors in drawing out blood from the diseased part, a string being tied to the hair, if it be the head that ails, or to any other part, and the opposite end is put into the sorcerer's mouth, who then commences sucking and spitting out blood, which he declares comes from the patient. Blood letting is practised occasionally to relieve pains in the head, or oppression of the system. The operation is performed by opening a vein in the arm, with a piece of rock crystal in the same way as Europeans bleed.

Fractures of the extremities are treated with splints and bandages, as in Europe. Venereal ulcers are sprinkled with alkaline wood ashes, the astringent liquid of the nettle bark, or a macerated preparation from a particular kind of broad-leaved grass. Superficial wounds are left to themselves, and usually heal without much trouble. Malformations of the body are attributed to the influence of the stars, caused by the mother eating forbidden food during pregnancy, or if occurring after birth it is still caused by the stars, in consequence of forbidden food being eaten. The teeth of the native are generally regular and very beautiful, indeed, in their natural state, I have never seen a single instance of decayed teeth, among them. Among those, however, who have been living near Europeans for some years past, and whose habits and diet have been changed from simple to more artificial ones, a great

alteration is taking place in this respect, and symptoms of decaying teeth are beginning to make their appearance among many.

Among other superstitions of the natives, they believe in the existence of an individual called in the Murrumbidgee Biam, or the Murray Biam—baitch—y, who has the form and figure of a black, but is deformed in the lower extremities, and is always either sitting cross-legged on the ground, or ferrying about in a canoe.

From him the natives say they derive many of the songs sung at their dances; he also causes diseases sometimes, and especially one which indents the face like the effects of small pox. Another evil agency, dreaded by the natives, is a spirit of the waters, called ngook—wonga, it causes many diseases to those who go into the waters in unauthorised places, or at improper times, hence a native is very loth to go into water he is not accustomed to for the first time.

To counteract the evil effects produced by this spirit, there are persons particularly devoted to this branch of sorcery, the following is a case where I saw them exercise their powers. A boy of about fourteen had at the Murray river been seized with a severe attack of erysipelas in the lower part of one of his legs, from bathing and remaining in the water when heated. As this did not get better, it was ascribed to the evil agency of the Spirit of the Waters; and the Pachwonga or Pachwin were called in to cure him. They arrived late at night, three in number, and at once proceeded to the exercise of their duties. As soon as it was seen that the magicians were coming, the friends of the boy lifted him up, and carrying him some distance away from the camp, placed him on the ground by himself, and then ranged themselves in two rows upon either side, in a sitting posture, but at some distance behind the patient. The three magi now advanced in the form of a triangle, one leading and the other two behind, equidistantly apart. They were all painted, carried bunches of green reeds in their hands, which they kept shaking, and danced [Note 89 at end of para.] with a measured tread, keeping the right foot always in advance of the other as in a galopade, and singing a low solemn dirge, which was vehemently beat time to, by the natives behind thumping on the ground. Upon arriving at the boy, the leading native fell down on his knees close to him, and took hold of the diseased leg, the other two still dancing and singing around the patient. In a little time, one of the two fell down also on his knees on another side of the boy, leaving the third still dancing and singing around them. At last he fell down also on his knees in a triangular position with the others, the boy being in the centre. All three now commenced blowing, spitting, making curious gurgling kinds of noises, waving their green bunches of reeds, and pressing forcibly upon the diseased leg to make the patient give audible indications of the evil spirit leaving him. After some time, two of the three doctors got up again, danced and sung around the boy, and then once more assuming their kneeling positions, recommenced spitting and blowing, waving their bunches of reeds, and making the same curious noises, but louder than ever. Their exorcism at last was effectual, the evil spirit, in the shape of a sharp stone, was extracted from the limb, and driven into the ground; but it was too dark they said to see it. As soon as this agreeable news was announced, the friends of the boy came up and hastily removed him back to the camp, whilst the three doctors assuming the triangular position, sung and danced round the place where the boy had been laid, and then advancing in the same form towards the river, keeping the right foot always in advance, they at last fairly drove the spirit into the water and relieved the neighbourhood from so troublesome a visitor.

[Note 89: “Dancing over him, shaking his frightful rattles, and singing songs of incantation, in the hopes to cure him by a charm.”—Catlin’s North American Indians, vol. i.p. 39.]

It was a long time before I lost a vivid impression of this ceremony; the still hour of the night, the naked savages, with their fancifully painted forms, their wild but solemn dirge, their uncouth gestures, and unnatural noises, all tended to keep up an illusion of an unearthly character, and contributed to produce a thrilling and imposing effect upon the mind.

At the Murray River, singular looking places are found sometimes, made by the natives by piling small stones close together, upon their ends in the ground, in a shape resembling the accompanying diagram, and projecting four or five inches above the ground. The whole length of the place thus inclosed, by one which I examined, was eleven yards; at the broad end it was two yards wide, at the narrow end one. The position of this singular looking place, was a clear space on the slope of a hill, the narrow end being the lowest, on in the direction of the river. Inside the line of stones, the ground was smoothed, and somewhat hollowed. The natives called it Mooyumbuck, and said it was a place for disenchanted an individual afflicted with boils. In other places, large heaps of small loose stones are piled up like small haycocks, but for what purpose I could never understand. This is done by the young men, and has some connection probably with their ceremonies or amusements.

In others, singular shaped spaces are inclosed, by serpentine trenches, a few inches deep, but for what purpose I know not, unless graves have formerly existed there.

Another practice of the natives, when travelling from one place to another, is to put stones up in the trees they pass, at different heights from the ground, to indicate the height of the sun when they passed. Other natives following, are thus made aware of the hour of the day when their friends passed particular points. Captain Grey found the same custom in Western Australia; vol. i. p. 113, he says:—

“I this day again remarked a circumstance, which had before this period elicited my attention, which was, that we occasionally found fixed on the boughs of trees, at a considerable height from the ground, pieces of sandstone, nearly circular in form, about an inch and a half in thickness, and from four to five in diameter, so that they resembled small mill-stones. What was the object of thus fashioning, and placing these stones, I never could conceive, for they are generally in the least remarkable spots. They cannot point out burial places, for I have made such minute searches, that in such case I must have found some of the bones; neither can they indicate any peculiar route through the country, for two never occur near one another.”

The power of sorcery appears always to belong, in a degree, to the aged, but it is assumed often by the middle aged men. It is no protection to the possessor, from attack, or injury, on the part of other natives. On the contrary, the greater the skill of the sorcerer, and the more extensive his reputation, the more likely is he to be charged with offences he is unconscious of, and made to pay their penalty. Sorcerers are not ubiquitous, but have the power of becoming invisible, and can transport themselves instantaneously to any place they please. Women are never sorcerers. It is a general belief among almost all the Aborigines, that Europeans, or white people, are resuscitated natives, who have changed their colour, and who are supposed to return to the same localities they had inhabited as black people. The most puzzling point, however, with this theory, appears to be that they cannot make out how it is that the returned natives do not know their former friends or relatives. I have myself often been asked, with seriousness and earnestness, who, among the Europeans, were their fathers, their mothers, and their other relatives, and how it is that the dead were so ignorant, or so forgetful, as not to know their friends when they again returned to the earth.

One old native informed me, that all blacks, when dead, go up to the clouds, where they have plenty to eat and drink; fish, birds, and game of all kinds, with weapons and implements to take them. He then told me, that occasionally individuals had been up to the clouds, and had come back, but that such instances were very rare; his own mother, he said, had been one of the favoured few. Some one from above had let down a rope, and hauled her up by it; she remained one night, and on her return, gave a description of what she had seen in a chant, or song, which he sung for me, but of the meaning of which I could make out nothing.

Chapter VI

NUMBERS—DISEASES—CAUSE OF LIMITED POPULATION—CRIMES AGAINST EUROPEANS—AMONGST THEMSELVES—TREATMENT OF EACH OTHER IN DISTRIBUTION OF FOOD, ETC.

There is scarcely any point connected with the subject of the Aborigines of New Holland, upon which it is more difficult to find an opinion, even approximating to the truth, than that of the aggregate population of the continent, or the average number of persons to be found in any given space. Nor will this appear at all surprising, when the character and habits of the people are taken into consideration. Destitute of any fixed place of residence, neither cultivating the soil, nor domesticating animals, they have no pursuits to confine them to any particular locality, or to cause them to congregate permanently in the same district. On the contrary, all their habits have an opposite tendency.

The necessity of seeking daily their food as they require it, the fact of that food not being procurable for any great length of time together in the same place, and the circumstance that its quality, and abundance, or the facility of obtaining it, are contingent upon the season of the year, at which they may visit any particular district, have given to their mode of life, an unsettled and wandering character.

The casual observer, or the passing traveller, has but little, therefore, to guide him in his estimate of the population of the country he may be in. A district that may at one time be thinly inhabited, or even altogether untenanted, may at another be teeming with population. The wanderer may at one time be surrounded by hundreds of savages, and at another, in the same place he may pass on alone and unheeded.

At Lake Victoria, on the Murray, I have seen congregated upwards of six hundred natives at once, again I have passed through that neighbourhood and have scarcely seen a single individual; nor does this alone constitute the difficulty and uncertainty involved in estimating the numbers of the Aborigines. Such are the silence and stealth with which all their movements are conducted, so slight a trace is left to indicate their line of march, and so small a clue by which to detect their presence, that the stranger finds it impossible to tell from any thing that he sees, whether he is in their vicinity or not. I have myself often when travelling, as I imagined in the most retired and solitary recesses of the forest, been suddenly surprised by the unexpected appearance of large bodies of natives, without being in the least able to conjecture whence they had come, or how they obtained the necessities of life, in what appeared to me an arid and foodless desert.

Captain Grey has observed in other parts of Australia, the same ingenuity and stealth manifested by them in either cloaking their movements, or concealing their presence, until circumstances rendered it in their opinion no longer necessary to preserve this concealment, vol. i. p. 147, he says: "Immediately numbers of other natives burst upon my sight, each tree, each rock, seemed to give forth its black denizen as if by enchantment; a moment before the most solemn silence pervaded these woods, we deemed that not a human being moved within miles of us, and now they rang with savage and ferocious yells, and fierce armed men crowded around us on every side, bent on our destruction."

Nor is it less difficult to arrive at the number of the population in those districts which are occupied by Europeans. In some, the native tribes rarely frequent the stations, in others, portions only of the different tribes are to be found; some belong to the district and others not. In all there is a difficulty in ascertaining the exact number of any tribe, or the precise limits to which their territory extends in every direction around. Even could these particulars be accurately obtained in a few localities, they would afford no data for estimating the

population of the whole, as the average number of inhabitants to the square mile, would always vary according to the character of the country and the abundance of food.

Upon this subject Captain Grey remarks, vol. ii. p. 246, "I have found the number of inhabitants to a square mile to vary so much from district to district, from season to season, and to depend upon so great a variety of local circumstances, that I am unable to give any computation which I believe would even nearly approach to truth."

Mr. Moorhouse, who has also paid much attention to this subject, in the neighbourhood of Adelaide, has arrived at the conclusion, that, in 1843, there were about sixteen hundred aborigines, in regular or irregular contact with the Europeans, in the province of South Australia; these he has classed as follows, viz.:—

In regular contact with Europeans,

Adelaide district 300 Encounter Bay 230 Moorunde 300 Port Lincoln 60 Hutt River 30

920

In irregular contact with Europeans,

Adelaide — Encounter Bay 100 Moorunde 200 Port Lincoln 340 Hutt River 40

680

or together about 1600.

Taking in the southern districts of South Australia 120 miles from Adelaide, the northern ones 160, and the eastern one 200. Mr. Moorhouse estimates that there are altogether only about 3000 natives. This however, appears to me to be a considerably under-rated number, and I should rather incline to the opinion, that there are twice as many, if the Port Lincoln peninsula be added to the limits already mentioned. In the Port Lincoln district, Mr. Schurman conjectures there are about 400.

On the Murray River, which is, perhaps, the most densely populated part of the country, I imagine there are, from Moorunde, about three to four natives to every mile of river, which as it winds very considerably in its course, would give a large population to the square mile, if only the valley of the Murray was taken into account.

There are other tribes also frequenting the river occasionally, from the back scrubs on either side; but as these range through a great extent of country beyond the valley, and only sometimes come down there on a visit; I do not include them in the estimate.

At Moorunde itself I have sometimes had from four to five hundred collected, and among those, only a few, perhaps, from the very remote tribes.

At the Rufus and Lake Victoria, I have seen above six hundred together, where they had no other motive to collect in so large a party, than from custom, and for the enjoyment of festivity.

Large towns are frequently the centre of meeting for many, and very distant tribes. The facility of obtaining scraps by begging, small rewards for trifling jobs of work, donations from the charitable, and a variety of broken victuals, offal, etc. enable them to collect in large numbers, and indulge to the uttermost their curiosity in observing the novelties around them,

in meeting strange tribes, and joining them either in war or festivity, in procuring tools, clothes, etc. to carry back and barter in their own districts, and for other similar objects. Thus, Adelaide is nearly always occupied by tribes from one part or other of the country: on an average, it will support probably six hundred in the way I have described, though occasionally eight hundred have met there. The following returns of the numbers who have attended the annual muster on the Queen's birthday, when bread and beef have been distributed, will show how the ratio has gone on increasing during the last five years.

In 1840 there were present 283 men, women, and children. 1841 there were present 374 men, women, and children. 1842 there were present 400 men, women, and children. 1843 there were present 450 men, women, and children. 1844 there were present 793 men, women, and children.

In the Murray district, where it has been customary, since the first establishment of the post at Moorunde, to issue a certain quantity of flour once in the month (at the full moon) to every native who chose to come in to receive it, the increase in attendance has been progressively going on, viz.

2 issues in 1841 the average attendance were 52 men, women, and children 12 issues in 1842 the average attendance were 94 men, women, and children 10 issues in 1843 the average attendance were 136 men, women, and children 9 issues in 1844 the average attendance were 171 men, women, and children

Occasionally nearly 500 natives have been present at these monthly issues of flour, and the reason that the average attendance is not greater, is, that immediately after collecting at Moorunde, at the full of the moon, to receive their flour, from 100 to 300 would usually set off to Adelaide, where there are so many objects of interest and attraction, and re-remain there for several months at a time, and especially during the winter. As fast, too, as one party returned to their own districts, another would go into town, and thus the average number would be constantly kept down. A third reason why the musters do not appear so large as they otherwise would, is that many of the more distant natives come down at other times than the full moon, and I have then been obliged to deviate from my usual custom, and issue flour to them at the periods when they arrived. The number of natives attending such extraordinary issues do not appear in the periodical returns.

In endeavouring to estimate the numbers and proportions of the sexes, and children, almost as great a difficulty exists as in that of obtaining their aggregate numbers. This arises from the fact of the more distant tribes who visit Europeans stations, frequently leaving their younger wives, or little children at home, with aged relatives, whilst they themselves go to a distance. In all the periodical, or regular issues of flour at the time of full moon, I have accurately kept lists of all who attended. The gross totals of thirty-three issues are as follows:—

Men 1266 Women 1330 Boys 930 Girls 551 Infants 52

From this it is apparent, first, that the women attending the monthly meetings at the Murray have been, on the whole, about five and a half per cent in excess of the men, an extraordinary and unusual circumstance, as compared with the results obtained at other places. I can only account for this upon the supposition before given, that when large bodies of natives leave Moorunde for Adelaide, more men than women go away, and that consequently a larger proportion of females is left behind. Mr. Moor-house remarks, upon this point, that he has

found the males to average seventy per cent more than the females, among the Adelaide tribes. My own observation leads me to the opinion that upon the Murray the two sexes are as nearly equal in numbers as may be.

Secondly, it would appear, that of the Moorunde issues, the number of girls attending has been little more than one half that of the boys. This may, perhaps, arise in some measure from females assuming the duties of women, and being classed as such, at an age when males would still be considered as only boys. The principal reason, however, must, as before, be ascribed to a greater number of girls being left behind by the more distant tribes when they come to visit Moorunde.

Thirdly, from the list I have given, it seems that to each woman there would be about 1 1/3 child. Upon this subject Mr. Moorhouse remarks, that his investigation has led to the conclusion that each woman has, on an average, five children born (nine being the greatest number known), but that each mother only rears, upon an average, two; and this I think, upon the whole, would be a tolerably correct estimate.

There is one point connected with the return I have given, peculiarly striking, as it shews the comparatively small increase that now appears to be going on among the more numerous tribes of the Aborigines, I allude to the fact of there only having been fifty-two young infants among 1330 women. By infants I mean such as had to be carried in the arms, for those who could walk at all have been classed among the boys and girls.

I have never known a case of twins among the Aborigines, and Mr. Moorhouse informs me that no case has ever come under his observation; but Captain Grey found such to occur sometimes in Western Australia. On the number and proportion of the sexes he observes, that 4.6 seemed to be the average number of children born to each woman, and that there was one female to every 1.3 males. With respect to the duration of life among the Aborigines, Captain Grey says, vol. ii. p. 246–248—”With regard to the age occasionally attained by the natives, I believe very erroneous ideas have been prevalent, for so far am I from considering them to be short lived, that I am certain they frequently attain the age of seventy years and upwards.” “Yet were these instances of longevity contrasted with the great number of deaths which take place during the period of infancy, there can be no doubt whatever that the average duration of life amongst these savage tribes falls far short of that enjoyed by civilized races.”

These remarks, as far as my observation has extended, apply to the natives of New Holland generally. I have frequently met with many venerable, white-headed men among the Aborigines, who could not, I think, have been less than eighty years of age, and who yet retained the full vigour of mind, and the bold, upright, though now wasted form, that had characterised them in the pride of manhood; but about sixty-five appears perhaps to be the average age attained by the old.

The second inference is more than borne out by the statement already recorded, that for every five children born on an average to each mother, two only are reared, and these subject to all the casualties and dangers which savage life is exposed to.

[Note 90: This can of course only apply to tribes tolerably well known to Europeans, and more or less frequently coming in contact with them. Of tribes in their natural state we can have no accurate data, and but few passing notes even that are worthy of confidence. Generally I have found children to be numerous among tribes who have never had intercourse with Europeans' and it is a well known fact that the increase of numbers in aboriginal tribes is checked in proportion to the frequency, or the extent of their communication with Europeans. At Flinders island to which 210 Van Diemen's Land natives were removed from Van Diemen's Land in 1835, this is singularly exemplified. In 1842 Count Strzelecki says, page 353—”And while each family of the interior of New South Wales, uncontaminated by contact

with the whites, swarms with children, those of Flinders island, had during eight years an accession of only fourteen in number.”]

Upon inquiry into the causes which tend to prevent population going on in an increasing ratio among the natives of Australia, the following appear to be the most prominent. First, polygamy, and the illicit and almost unlimited intercourse between the sexes, habits which are well known to check the progress of population, wherever they prevail.

Secondly. Infanticide, which is very general, and practised to a great extent, especially among the younger and favourite women.

Thirdly. Diseases, to which in a savage state young children are peculiarly liable, such as dysentery, cold, and their consequences, etc.

[Note 91: *Huic accedit, ex quo illis sunt immisti Europaei, lues venerea. Morbum infantibus matres afflant, et ingens multitudo quotannis inde perit.*]

Fourthly. Wars and quarrels, occurring sometimes from the most trivial circumstances, and often ending in deaths, or wounds that terminate in death.

The diseases to which the natives are subject, are with the exception of those induced by artificial living, as gout, rheumatism, etc. very similar to those which afflict Europeans, the principal being the result of inflammation, acute, or chronic, arising from exposure to the cold, and which affects most generally the bronchia, the lungs, and the pleura. Phthisis occasionally occurs, as does also erysipelas. Scrofula has been met with, but very rarely. A disease very similar to the small-pox, and leaving similar marks upon the face, appears formerly to have been very prevalent, but I have never met with an existing case, nor has Mr. Moorhouse ever fallen in with one. It is said to have come from the eastward originally, and very probably may have been derived in the first instance from Europeans, and the infection passed along from one tribe to another: it has not been experienced now for many years.

[Note 92: *Ex morbis quos patiuntur ab adventu Europaeorum longe frequentissima et maxime fatalis est lues venerea. An hic morbus indigenis, priusquam illis immiscebuntur Europaei erat notus, sciri nunc minime potest. Ipsi jamdiu ex oriente adductum dicunt, ex quo maxime probabile videtur, eum, origine prima ex Europa, inde de gente in gentem per totam poene continentem esse illatam. Neque dubium eum in gentibus iis quibus non immiscentur Europaei, neque frequentem esse, nec acrem, eorum autem per immisionem terribilem in modum augescere. Quinetiam ii sunt indigenarum mores, ut, adveniat modo forma sub pessima morbus, velox et virulentus qualis nusquam alias illico latissime effluat. Licet bene sciant hae gentes, hunc, sicut ejus modi alii morbum per contactum contractum esse illis tamen pestem cuius indies spectantur tantae tamque terribiles offensiones, vitare minime curae est. Vidi egomet plurimos non modo aegrotorum in tentoriis otiari, verum etiam foedatus ita secure induere vestes aut iisdem in stragulis cubare, ac si optima ibi adesset sanitas. Mihi stationem publicam ponendi causa ad “Morrandi” in mensa Octobris, 1841, advenienti, occurrerant populi morbis poene liberi formam atque membra bene formati; postea autem ex frequenti cum oppido et proximis stationibus commercio, circa Octobrem 1844, morbos quam maxime horridos contraxerant. Inde eo tempore moribundi erant plurimi, nonnulli mortui, paucique ex iis, qui frequenter coibant, ex omni aetate et sexu hujusce pestis formis omnino expertes erant. Apud indigenas morbus hic eodem fere modo quo apud Europaeos sese ostendere videtur variis tamen ex causis etiam magis odiosum, eo praesertim quod pustulae rotundae, magnitudinem fere unciam habentes, simul in cute exsurgunt. His gradatim, cum pure effluente, pars media expletur, et inde magis magisque crescentibus et dispersis corporis universi superficies tabe ac scabie laborat, quae propinquantibus simul horrorem ac nauseam movent. Ulcera haec aliquando infra sex vel octo menses ipsa se cohaerent; plerumque autem incitamentorum et vi causticorum ad locum adhibita infra*

hebdomadas tres sanantur. Nec minus apud indigenas quam apud Europaeos, remedium hujusoe morbi speciale: medicamenta sunt mercurialia, majore tamen illis cum periculo, tum propter eorum mores, quum quod plerumque sub dio vivunt, omni absente medicina. Post annum primum aut alterum morbus evanescit, interdum mortem affert. Semper autem aegrotis miseris cruciatus maximus et dolores perpetui inde flunt. Moorhouse de morbo hoc opiniones in paucis a meis experimentis dissident, quum ille num glandem penis aut inguinis, principio nunquam, glandem autem penis rarissime vel secundo attingere arbitrabatur. Ego autem et hoc et illud in ripis Murray fluminis vidi.]

Many natives of deformed persons are occasionally to be met with, especially in the extremities. I have seen natives tall, and perfect, and well built in the body and limbs, from the head down to the knees: but from that point downwards, shrivelled and blighted, presenting but skin and bone. Many are blind in one eye, some in both; sometimes this appears the effect of inflammation, or of cataract; at others, it may be the result of accident. Among those natives inhabiting the sandy drifts along the western coast, where the sand is always circling about in a perfect shower, I have no doubt but that many become blind from its effects.

In October, 1839, Mr. Moorhouse found nine inhabitants in two huts to the south; out of these, five were quite blind, and one had lost one eye; they were occupied in making nets. Deaf and dumb persons are not often found among the Aborigines, but I have met with instances of this kind. One of the most intelligent natives I ever met with, was a deaf and dumb youth at the Wimmera. From this poor boy, I could more readily and intelligibly obtain by signs a description of the country, its character, and localities, than from any native I ever met with, whose language I was at the time quite unacquainted with.

The blind, or the infirm, are generally well treated, and taken care of when young, but as soon as they advance in years, or become an impediment to the movements of the tribe, they are abandoned at once by their people, and left to perish.

The crimes committed by the natives against Europeans do not bear any proportion, either numerically, or in magnitude, to their number, as a people, and the circumstances of their position. When we consider the low state of morals, or rather, the absence of all moral feeling upon their part, the little restraint that is placed upon their community, by either individual authority, or public opinion, the injuries they are smarting under, and the aggressions they receive, it cannot but be admitted that they are neither an ill disposed, nor a very vindictive people. The following are the returns of the convictions of natives in South Australia for the years 1842 and 1843, viz. :—

SUPREME COURT.

OFFENCE. 1842 1843 1844

Larceny	2	0	2
Assault with intent to murder	2	0	0
Wilful murder	0	3	1
Cattle stealing	0	1	2

RESIDENT MAGISTRATE'S COURT.

Assault	0	3	3
Breaking windows	1	0	0
Intoxication	3	0	0
Injuring park trees	0	0	2

9 9 11

In the colony of New South Wales, the return of all the trials of the Aborigines, from 10th February, 1837, to the 24th July, 1843, amounted to thirty-three cases, and implicated sixty-

one individuals. The offences were chiefly murder and assault, or stealing sheep and cattle. In ten cases only, out of thirty-three, convictions took place, and nineteen individuals were sentenced, viz., twelve to death, six to transportation for ten years, and one to a flogging. [Note 93: For particulars vide Papers on the Aborigines of Australian Colonies, printed for the House of Commons, August 9th, 1844.]

Among the natives, but few crimes are committed against each other; in fact, it would be somewhat difficult to define what their idea of crime would be, for that which is offensive on the part of another is considered a virtue in themselves. Accustomed to act upon the impulse of the moment, and to take summary vengeance for injury, real or imagined, their worst deeds are but in accordance with their own standard of right, having no moral sense of what is just or equitable in the abstract, their only test of propriety must in such cases be, whether they are numerically, or physically strong enough to brave the vengeance of those whom they may have provoked, or injured. Custom has, however, from time immemorial, usurped the place of laws, and with them, perhaps, is even more binding than they would be. Through custom's irresistible sway has been forged the chain that binds in iron fetters a people, who might otherwise be said to be without government or restraint. By it, the young and the weak are held in willing subjection to the old and the strong. Superstitious to a degree they are taught from earliest infancy to dread they know not what evil or punishment, if they infringe upon obligations they have been told to consider as sacred. All the better feelings and impulses implanted in the human heart by nature, are trampled upon by customs, which, as long as they remain unchanged, must for ever prevent them from rising in the scale of civilization and improvement, or to use the apt and expressive language of Captain Grey upon this point, vol. ii. p. 217 :—

“He (the native) is in reality subjected to complex laws, which not only deprive him of all free agency of thought, but at the same time, by allowing no scope for the development of intellect, benevolence, or any other great moral qualification, they necessarily bind him down in a hopeless state of barbarism, from which it is impossible for him to emerge, so long as he is enthralled by these customs, which, on the other hand, are so ingeniously devised as to have a direct tendency to annihilate any effort that is made to overthrow them.”

Those customs regulate all things, the acquisition and disposal of wives, the treatment of women, of the elders, the acquiescence of the younger members of a tribe in any measure that may have been decided upon by the old men, the rules which guide the international intercourse between different tribes, the certain restrictions or embargoes that are put upon different kinds of food or at certain ages, the fear of sorcery or witchcraft if they transgress the orders of the elders, or break through the ordinances that have been imposed upon them, and many other similar influences.

In their intercourse with each other I have generally found the natives to speak the truth and act with honesty, and they will usually do the same with Europeans if on friendly terms with them. In their treatment of each other, and in the division of food, policy and custom have induced them to be extremely polite and liberal. Old men are especially well off in this respect, as the younger people always give them the best and largest share of everything. Males generally are generous and liberal to each other in sharing what food they have, but it is not often that the females participate in the division. When following their usual pursuits upon the Murray, I have seen the men after an hour or two's fishing with the nets, sit down and devour all they had caught, without saving anything for their family or wives, and then hurry about noon to the camps to share in what had been procured by the women, who usually begin to return at that hour, with what they have been able to collect. Favourite kinds of food are also frequently sent as presents from one male to another, and at other times two parties will meet and exchange the different kinds they respectively bring. Among the younger people I have often seen a poor hungry fellow, who had by his skill or perseverance obtained some small article of food, compelled by the rules of savage politeness to share out the petty

spoil among a group of expectant sharks around, whilst he whose skill or labour had procured it dared hardly taste it, and was sure to come in for the smallest share.

Naturally, I do not think they are bloodthirsty; custom or example may sometimes lead them on to shed blood, but it is usually in accordance with their prejudices or to gratify the momentary excitement of passion. With many vices and but few virtues, I do not yet think the Australian savage is more? vicious in his propensities or more virulent in his passions than are the larger number of the lower classes of what are called civilized communities. Well might they retort to our accusations, the motives and animus by which too many of our countrymen have been actuated towards them.

I have remarked that as far as my observation has enabled me to judge, the natives are rarely guilty of offences (which they deem such,) towards members of their own tribes. There are many acts, however, which according to our ideas of right and wrong, are acts of the greatest cruelty and tyranny, which they exercise towards each other, though sanctioned by custom, and enforced by daily practice. Such are the cruelties inflicted upon the women, who are looked upon in the light of slaves, and mercilessly beaten or speared for the most trifling offences. No one under any circumstances ever attempts to take the part of a female, and consequently they are maltreated and oppressed in a shocking degree. Does a native meet a woman in the woods and violate her, he is not the one made to feel the vengeance of the husband, but the poor victim whom he has abused. Is there hard or disagreeable work of any kind to be done—the woman is compelled to do it. Is there a scarcity of food at the camp when the husband comes home hungry—the wife is punished for his indolence and inactivity. [Note 94: In February 1842, Mr. Gouger, then Colonial Secretary at Adelaide, caused a dog belonging to a native to be shot for some cause or other I am not acquainted with. The animal had been left by its master in the charge of his wife, and as soon as he learnt that it was dead, he speared her for not taking better care of it.]

The complete subserviency of the younger people of both sexes in the savage community, to the older or leading men, is another very serious evil they labour under. The force of habit and of traditional custom has so completely clouded their otherwise quick perceptions, that they blindly yield to whatever the elders may require of them; they dare not disobey, they dare not complain of any wrong or indignity they may be subjected to this has been and will be the greatest bar to their civilization or improvement until some means are taken to free them from so degrading a thraldom, and afford that protection from the oppression of the strong and the old which they so greatly require.

On the Murray river, or amongst the Adelaide natives I am not aware that any stated punishments are affixed to specific crimes, except that of spearing in the arm to expiate deaths. Vengeance appears usually to be summarily executed and on the spot, according to the physical strength or number of friends of the individual injured; otherwise it is made a cause of quarrel between tribes, and a battle or disturbance of some kind takes place. This appears to be one great point of distinction between the practice of some of the tribes in Southern and Western Australia. Captain Grey says in reference to the latter place, (vol. ii. p. 243.)

“Any other crime may be compounded for, by the criminal appearing and submitting himself to the ordeal of having spears thrown at him by all such persons as conceive themselves to have been aggrieved, or by permitting spears to be thrust through certain parts of his body; such as through the thigh, or the calf of the leg, or under the arm. The part which is to be pierced by a spear, is fixed for all common crimes, and a native who has incurred this penalty, sometimes quietly holds out his leg for the injured party to thrust his spear through.”

This custom does not appear to hold among the tribes of South Australia, with whom I have come in contact; but I have often been told by natives of tribes in New South Wales, that they

practised it, although an instance of the infliction of the punishment never came under my own observation.

Injuries, when once overlooked, are never revenged afterwards. Tribes may compel members to make restitution, as in the case of stealing a wife; but I have never known an instance of one of their number being given up to another tribe, for either punishment or death. Occasionally they have been induced to give up guilty parties to Europeans; but to effect this, great personal influence on the part of the person employed is necessary to ensure success. Though they are always ready to give up or point out transgressors, if belonging to other tribes than their own.

Chapter VII.

LANGUAGE, DIALECTS, CUSTOMS, etc.—GENERAL SIMILARITY THROUGHOUT THE CONTINENT—CAUSES OF DIFFERENCES—ROUTE BY WHICH THE NATIVES HAVE OVERSPREAD THE COUNTRY, etc.

During the last few years much has been done towards an examination and comparison of the dialects spoken by the aboriginal tribes of Australia in different portions of the continent. The labours of Mr. Threlkeld, of Captain Grey, of Messrs. Teichelmann and Schurmann, of Mr. Meyer, of Mr. Schurman, with the occasional notes of visitors and travellers, have done much to elucidate this subject, and have presented to the world vocabularies of the Hunter's River and Lake Macquarie districts in New South Wales; of Swan River and King George's Sound in Western Australia; of Adelaide, of Encounter Bay, and of Port Lincoln, in South Australia; besides occasional phrases or scanty manuals of various other dialects spoken in different districts. From these varied contributions it would appear that a striking coincidence exists in the personal appearance, character, customs, traditions, dialects, etc. among the many and remotely separated tribes scattered over the surface of New Holland. Each of these, no doubt, varies in many particulars from the others, and so much so some times, as to lead to the impression that they are essentially different and distinct. [Note 95 at end of para.] Upon close examination, however, a sufficient general resemblance is usually found to indicate that all the tribes have originally sprung from the same race, that they have gradually spread themselves over the whole continent from some one given point; which appears, as far as we can infer from circumstantial evidence, to have been somewhere upon the northern coast. There are some points of resemblance which, as far as is yet known, appear to be common to most of the different dialects with which we are acquainted. Such are, there being no generic terms as tree, fish, bird, etc., but only specific ones as applied to each particular variety of tree, fish, bird, etc. The cardinal numbers, being only carried up to three, there being no degrees of comparison except by a repetition to indicate intensity, or by a combination of opposite adjectives, to point out the proportion intended, and no distinction of genders, if we except an attempt to mark one among those tribes who give numerical names to their children, according to the order of their birth, as before mentioned. [Note 96: Chap. IV. nomenclature.] All parts of speech appear to be subject to inflections, if we except adverbs, post-fixes, and post-positions. Nouns, adjectives, pronouns and verbs have all three numbers, singular, dual and plural. The nominative agent always precedes an active verb. When any new object is presented to the native, a name is given to it, from some fancied similarity to some object they already know, or from some peculiar quality or attribute it may possess; thus, rice is in the Moorunde dialect called "yeelilee" or "maggots," from an imagined resemblance between the two objects.

[Note 95: Catlin remarks the existence of a similar number and variety in the dialects of the American Indians, but appears to think them radically different from one another.]

The most singular and remarkable fact, connected with the coincidence of customs or dialect, amongst the Aborigines, is that it exists frequently to a less degree among tribes living close to one another, than between those who are more remotely separated. The reason of this apparent anomaly would seem to be, that those tribes now living near to one another, and among whom the greatest dissimilarity of language and customs is found to exist, have originally found their way to the same neighbourhood by different lines of route, and consequently the greatest resemblances in language and custom, might naturally be expected to be met with, (as is in reality the case), not between tribes at present the nearest to each other, but between those, who although now so far removed, occupy respectively the opposite extremes of the lines of route by which one of them had in the first instance crossed over the continent.

Without entering into an elaborate analysis, of either the structure or radical derivation of the various dialects we are acquainted with, I shall adduce a few instances in each, of words taken from the vocabularies I have mentioned before, for King George's Sound, Adelaide, Encounter Bay, and Port Lincoln, and supply them myself from other dialects, including those meeting on the Murray or at the Darling, to shew the degree of similarity that exists in language.

In selecting the examples for comparison, I have taken first the personal pronouns and numerals, as being the words which usually assimilate more closely in the different dialects, than any other. Secondly, those words representing objects which would be common to all tribes, and which from their continual recurrence, and daily use, might naturally be supposed to vary the least from each other, if the original language of all were the same, but which, if radically different in any, render the subject still more difficult and embarrassing.

DIALECTS =====

[Note: At this point in the book a table appears, which lists common English words and the equivalent word as taken from the vocabularies of aborigines from various locations. This table has not been reproduced in full, however, a few entries are given below.]

English	Western	Adelaide	Encounter	Parnkalla	Aiawong
	Australia		Bay	(Port Lincoln)	(Moorundie)

I	Nganya	Ngaii	Ngaape	Ngai, ngatto	Ngappo
Thou	Nginnee	Ninna	Nginte	Ninna	Ngurru
She	Bal	Pa	Kitye	Panna	Nin
We (Ye)	Nganneel	Ngadlu	Ngane	Ngarrinyalbo	Ngenno
They	Balgoon	Parna	Kar	Yardna	Ngau-o
We two	Ngal-li	Ngadli	Ngele	Ngadli	Ngel-lo
You two	Newball	Niwa	Ngurle	Nuwalla	Ngupal
They two	Boala	Purla	Kengk	Pudlanbi	Dlau-o
One	Gyne	Kumande	Yammalaitye	Kuma	Meiter
Two	Kardura	Purlaitye	Ning	Kaiengg	Kuttara
Many	Partanna	Towata	Ruwar	Kulbarri	Neil
Few	Warrang	Kutyonde	—	—	Baupalata

Upon comparison of the different dialects given in the two foregoing tables, and which comprise an extent of country, embracing fully one half of the continent of Australia, it will be apparent that a sufficient degree of resemblance exists to justify the conclusion, that they were derived from one and the same original. It is true, that in many respects, there are sometimes even radical differences in some of the words of various dialects; but as Captain Grey judiciously remarks, if the comparison in such cases be extended, and the vocabulary of each enlarged, there will always be found points of resemblance, either in the dialects compared, or in some intermediate dialect, which will bear out the conclusion assumed. [Note 97 at end of para.] This view is still further strengthened, by including in the comparison the weapons, habits, customs, and traditions, of the various tribes.

[Note 97. I may here refer to a curious mathematical calculation, by Dr. Thomas Young, to the effect, that if three words coincide in two different languages, it is ten to one they must be derived in both cases from some parent language, or introduced in some other manner. "Six words would give more," he says, "than seventeen hundred to one, and eight near 100,000; so that in these cases, the evidence would be little short of absolute certainty."—Vestiges of the Creation, p. 302.]

It must be admitted, however, that where the languages spoken by two tribes, appear to differ greatly, there is no key common to both, or by which a person understanding one of them thoroughly, could in the least degree make out the other, although an intimate acquaintance with one dialect and its construction, would undoubtedly tend to facilitate the learning of another. A strong illustration of this occurs at Moorunde, where three dialects meet, varying so much from each other, that no native of any one of the three tribes, can understand a single word spoken by the other two, except he has learnt their languages as those of a foreign people.

The dialects I allude to, are first that of the Murray river, called the "Aiawong" and which is spoken with slight variations from the Lake Alexandrina, up to the Darling. Secondly, the "Boraipar," or language of the natives to the east of the Murray, and which appears in its variations to branch into that of the south-eastern tribes; and thirdly, the "Yak-kumban," or dialect spoken by the natives, inhabiting the country to the north-west and north of the Murray, and which extends along the range of hills from Mount Bryant to the Darling near Laidley's Ponds, and forms in its variations the language of the Darling itself; these tribes meet upon the Murray at Moorunde, and can only communicate to each other by the intervention of the Aiawong dialect, which the north-western or south-eastern tribes are compelled to learn, before they can either communicate with each other, or with the natives of the Murray, at their common point of rendezvous.

To the tables already given, it is thought desirable to add two of the dialects, spoken in the country to the eastward of South Australia, and which were published for the House of Commons, with other papers on the Aborigines, in August 1844.

[Note: At this point in the book two table appear, with the following headings. These tables have not been reproduced in this eBook.]

A SPECIMEN OF THE DIFFERENCE OF DIALECTS SPOKEN BY THE NATIVE TRIBES OF PORT PHILLIP.

SPECIMEN OF FIVE DIALECTS SPOKEN BY THE ABORIGINES OF THE NORTH-WESTERN DISTRICT.

Captain Flinders observed the same difference to exist in various parts of New Holland, which he visited, and yet that judicious navigator inclined to the opinion that all the various tribes had originally one common origin. Vol. ii. p. 213-14, he says,

"I do not know that the language of any two parts of Terra Australis, however near, has been found to be entirely the same; for even at Botany Bay, Port Jackson, and Broken Bay, not only the dialect, but many words are radically different; and this confirms one part of an observation, the truth of which seems to be generally admitted, that although similarity of language in two nations proves their origin to be the same, yet dissimilarity of languages is no proof of the contrary position.

"The language of Caledon Bay (north-west coast) may therefore be totally different to what is spoken on the east and south coasts, and yet the inhabitants have one common origin; but I do not think that the language is absolutely and wholly different, though it certainly was no better understood by Bongarrco (a Sydney native) than by ourselves. In three instances I found a similarity. The personal pronoun of Port Jackson, 'Ngia' (I), was used here, and apparently in the same sense. When inquiry was made after the axe, the natives replied 'yehangeree-py,' making signs of beating, and py signifies to beat in the Port Jackson language. The third instance was that of the lad Woga calling to Bongarree in the boat, which after he had done several times without being answered, he became angry, and exclaimed

Bongarree—gah in a vehement manner, as Bongarree himself would have done in a similar case."

Captain Grey, in speaking of the Aborigines of New Holland, says (vol. ii. p. 209),

"One singularity in the dialects spoken by the Aborigines in different portions of Australia is, that those of districts widely removed from one another, sometimes assimilate very closely, whilst the dialects spoken in the intermediate ones differ considerably from either of them. The same circumstances take place with regard to their rights and customs."

And again, after comparing some of the dialects of South Australia and New South Wales with those of Western Australia, Captain Grey says (vol. ii. p. 216),

"Having thus traced the entire coast line of the continent of Australia, it appears that a language the same in root is spoken throughout this vast extent of country, and from the general agreement in this, as well as in personal appearance, rites and ceremonies, we may fairly infer a community of origin for the Aborigines."

Had we a collected and an authentic account of the dialects, weapons, habits, customs, and traditions of all the tribes of Australia with whom Europeans have already been in close or friendly contact, and which, with very few exceptions, would embrace the circuit of the whole continent, we should have a mass of valuable and interesting information, that would enable us, not only to form a probable opinion as to the community of origin of the various tribes, and the point from which they first overspread the continent, but also to guide us in conjecturing the routes which the various offsets have taken from the parent tribe, the places of contact where they have met from opposite extremities of the continent, and the gradual change which has taken place in the habits, customs, and dialects of each.

In the absence of many links necessary to form a connection, we can at present only surmise conclusions, which otherwise might have been almost certainly deduced.

Connecting, however, and comparing all the facts with which we are acquainted, respecting the Aborigines, it appears that there are still grounds sufficient to hazard the opinion, that it is not improbable that Australia was first peopled on its north-western coast, between the parallels of 12 degrees and 16 degrees S. latitude. From whence we might surmise that three grand divisions had branched out from the parent tribe, and that from the offsets of these the whole continent had been overspread.

The first division appears to have proceeded round the north-western, western, and south-western coast, as far as the commencement of the Great Australian Bight. The second, or central one, appears to have crossed the continent inland, to the southern coast, striking it about the parallel of 134 degrees E. longitude. The third division seems to have followed along the bottom of the Gulf of Carpentaria to its most south-easterly bight, and then to have turned off by the first practicable line in a direction towards Fort Bourke, upon the Darling. From these three divisions various offsets and ramifications would have been made from time to time as they advanced, so as to overspread and people by degrees the whole country round their respective lines of march. Each offset appearing to retain fewer or more of the original habits, customs, etc. of the parent tribe in proportion to the distance traversed, or its isolated position, with regard to communication with the tribes occupying the main line of route of its original division; modified also, perhaps, in some degree, by the local circumstances of the country through which it may have spread.

Commencing with the parent tribe, located as I have supposed, first upon the north-west coast, we find, from the testimony of Captain Flinders and Dampier, that the male natives of that part of the country, have two front teeth of the upper jaw knocked out at the age of

puberty, and that they also undergo the rite of circumcision; but it does not appear that any examination was made with sufficient closeness to ascertain, whether [Note 98: Vide Note 78.] any other ceremony was conjoined with that of circumcision. How far these ceremonies extend along the north-western or western coasts we have no direct evidence, but at Swan River, King George's Sound, and Cape Arid, both customs are completely lost, and for the whole of the distance intervening between these places, and extending fully six hundred miles in straight line along the coast, the same language is so far spoken, that a native of King George's Sound, who accompanied me when travelling from one point to the other, could easily understand, and speak to any natives we met with. This is, however, an unusual case, nor indeed am I aware that there is any other part of Australia where the same dialect continues to be spoken by the Aborigines, with so little variation, for so great a distance, as in the colony of Western Australia.

Following round the southern coast easterly, the head of the Great Bight is the first point at which any great change appears to occur, and even here it is less in the character, language, and weapons of the natives, than in their ceremonial observances. For the first time the rite of circumcision is observed, and conjoined with it the still more extraordinary practice to which I have before alluded. The ceremony of knocking out the two upper front teeth of boys arrived at the age of puberty, is not, however, adopted. We have already noticed, that for six hundred miles to the west and north-west from the Great Bight, circumcision is unknown. The tribes, therefore, who practise it, cannot have come from that direction, neither are they likely to have come from the eastward, for after crossing the head of the Port Lincoln peninsula, and descending towards Adelaide, we find the rite of circumcision alone is practised, without any other ceremony in connection with it. Now, in a change of habits or customs, originating in the wandering, unsettled life of savages, it is very likely, that many of their original customs may gradually be dropped or forgotten; but it is scarcely probable, that they should be again revived by their descendants, after a long period of oblivion, and when those tribes from whom they more immediately proceeded, no longer remembered or recognised such ceremonials. By extending the inquiry still further to the east, the position I have assumed is more forcibly borne out, for the rite of circumcision itself then becomes unknown. It is evident, therefore, that the Adelaide or Port Lincoln natives could not have come along either the eastern or western coasts, and retained customs that are there quite unknown, neither could they have come across the country inland, in the direction of the Darling, for the ceremonies alluded to are equally unknown there. They must then have crossed almost directly from the north-western coast, towards the south-eastern extremity of the great Australian Bight. And from them the Adelaide natives would appear to be a branch or offset.

Returning to the north-west coast, and tracing down the route of the third division of the parent family, from the south-east Bight of Carpentaria, towards Fort Bourke upon the Darling, we shall find, that by far the greatest and most fertile portion of New Holland appears to have been peopled by it. In its progress, offsets and ramifications would have branched off in every direction along the various ranges or watercourses contiguous to the line of route. All the rivers running towards the eastern coast, together with the Nammoy, the Gwyder, the Castlereagh, Macquarie, Bogan, Lochlan, Darling, Hume, Goulburn, etc. with their many branches and tributaries, would each afford so many routes for the different sub-divisions of the main body, to spread over the varied and fertile regions of Eastern, South-eastern, and part of Southern Australia. As tribe separated from tribe, each would retain, in a greater or less degree, some of the language, habits, or customs of the original division; but such points of resemblance would naturally again undergo many changes or modifications, in proportion to the time, distance, or isolated character of the separation. If we look at the progress of any two parties of natives, branching off upon different rivers, and trace them, either upwards or downwards, we shall find, that the further they went, the more isolated they would become, and the less likely to come again in contact with each other, or with the original division from which they separated. We may, therefore, naturally expect a much greater variety of dialects or customs in a country that is much intersected by rivers, or

ranges, or by any features that tend to produce the isolating effect that I have described, than in one whose character has no such tendency; and this in reality we find to be the case. In Western and South-western Australia, as far as the commencement of the Great Bight, the features and character of the country appear to be but little diversified, and here, accordingly, we find the language of the natives radically the same, and their weapons, customs, and ceremonies very similar throughout its whole extent; but if, on the other hand, we turn to Eastern, South-eastern, and part of Southern Australia, we find the dialects, customs, and weapons of the inhabitants, almost as different as the country itself is varied by the intersection of ranges and rivers.

The division I have supposed as taking a south-easterly course from the Gulf of Carpentaria, would appear early to have lost the rite of circumcision; but to have retained among some of its branches, the practice of knocking out the front teeth of the upper jaw. Thus, those who made their way to Port Jackson and to Hunter's River, and to some of the southern parts of New South Wales, still retained the practice of knocking out one of the front teeth at the age of puberty; but at Keppel's, Harvey's, and Glass-House bays, on the north-east coast, at Twofold bay on the south-east, at Port Phillip on the south, and upon the rivers Darling and Murray, of the interior, no such rite is practised. It is clear, therefore, that when the continent was first peopled, the natives of Sydney or Hunter's River could not have come round the north-east coast by Keppel's or Harvey's bays, and retained a ceremony that is there lost; neither could the Murrumbidgee or southern districts of New South Wales, have been peopled from Port Phillip, or from South Australia, or by tribes passing up the Murray for the same reason. It is not demanding too much, therefore, to suppose that the general lines of route taken by the Aborigines in spreading over the continent of Australia, have been somewhat analogous to those I have imagined, or that we can fairly account for any material differences there may be in the dialects, customs, or weapons of the different tribes, by referring them to the effect of local circumstances, the length of time that may have elapsed since separation, or to the isolated position in which they may have been placed, with regard to that division of the parent tribe from which they had seceded.

At present our information respecting the customs, habits, weapons and dialects of the various tribes is too limited and too scattered to enable us to trace with accuracy the division to which each may have originally belonged, or the precise route by which it had arrived at its present location; but I feel quite confident that this may be done with tolerable certainty, when the particulars I have referred to shall be more abundantly and correctly recorded.

It is at least a subject of much interest, and one that is well worthy the attention of the traveller or the philanthropist. No one individual can hope personally to collect the whole material required; but if each recorded with fidelity the facts connected with those tribes, with whom he personally came in contact, a mass of evidence would soon be brought together that would more than suffice for the purpose required.

Chapter VIII.

EFFECTS OF CONTACT WITH EUROPEANS—ATTEMPTS AT IMPROVEMENT AND CIVILIZATION—ACCOUNT OF SCHOOLS—DEFECTS OF THE SYSTEM.

Some attempts have been made in nearly all the British Settlements of Australia to improve the condition of the aboriginal population; the results have, however, in few cases, met the expectations of the promoters of the various benevolent schemes that have been entered upon for the object; nor have the efforts hitherto made succeeded in arresting that fatal and melancholy effect which contact with civilization seems ever to produce upon a savage people. It has already been stated, that in all the colonies we have hitherto established upon the continent, the Aborigines are gradually decreasing in number, or have already disappeared in proportion to the time their country has been occupied by Europeans, or to the number of settlers who have been located upon it.

Of the blighting and exterminating effects produced upon simple and untutored races, by the advance of civilization upon them, we have many and painful proofs. History records innumerable instances of nations who were once numerous and powerful, decaying and disappearing before this fatal and inexplicable influence; history WILL record, I fear, similar results for the many nations who are now struggling; alas, how vainly, against this desolating cause. Year by year, the melancholy and appalling truth is only the more apparent, and as each new instance multiplies upon us, it becomes too fatally confirmed, until at last we are almost, in spite of ourselves, forced to the conviction, that the first appearance of the white men in any new country, sounds the funeral knell of the children of the soil. In Africa, in the country of the Bushmen, Mr. Moffat says—

“I have traversed those regions, in which, according to the testimony of the farmers, thousands once dwelt, drinking at their own fountains, and killing their own game; but now, alas, scarcely is a family to be seen! It is impossible to look over those now uninhabited plains and mountain glens without feeling the deepest melancholy, whilst the winds moaning in the vale seem to echo back the sound, ‘Where are they?’”

Another author, with reference to the Cape Colony, remarks—

“The number of natives, estimated at the time of the discovery at about 200,000, are stated to have been reduced, or cut off, to the present population of about 32,000, by a continual system of oppression, which once begun, never slackened.”

Catlin gives a feeling and melancholy account of the decrease of the North American Indians, [Note 99: Vide Catlin’s American Indians, vol. i. p. 4 and 5, and vol. ii. p. 238.] and similar records might be adduced of the sad fate of almost every uncivilized people, whose country has been colonized by Europeans. In Sydney, which is the longest established of all our possessions in New Holland, it is believed that not a single native of the original tribes belonging to Port Jackson is now left alive. [Note 100 at end of para.] Advancing from thence towards the interior a miserable family or two may be met with, then a few detached groups of half-starved wretches, dependant upon what they can procure by begging for their daily sustenance. Still further, the scattered and diseased remnants [Note 101 at end of para.], of once powerful, but now decayed tribes are seen interspersed throughout the country, until at last upon arriving at the more remote regions, where the blighting and annihilating effects of colonization have not yet overtaken them, tribes are yet found flourishing in their natural state, free from that misery and diminution which its presence always brings upon them.

[Note 100: “In the first year of the settlement of New South Wales, 1788, Governor Phillip caused the amount of the population of Port Jackson to be ascertained, by every cove in it being visited by different inspectors at the same time. The number of natives found in this

single harbour was 130, and they had 67 boats. At the same time it was known that many were in the woods making new canoes. From this and other data, Governor Phillip estimated the population between Botany Bay and Broken Bay inclusive, at 1500."—Aboriginal Protection Society's Report, May 1839, p. 13.

In Report of the same Society for July 1839, page 71, Mr. Threlkeld says—"Of one large tribe in the interior four years ago there were 164 persons—there are now only three individuals alive!!"]

[Note 101: "The whole eastern country, once thickly peopled, may now be said to be entirely abandoned to the whites, with the exception of some scattered families in one part, and of a few straggling individuals in another; and these once so high spirited, so jealous of their independence and liberty, now treated with contempt and ridicule even by the lowest of the Europeans; degraded, subdued, confused, awkward, and distrustful, ill concealing emotions of anger, scorn, and revenge—emaciated and covered with filthy rags;—these native lords of the soil, more like spectres of the past than living men, are dragging on a melancholy existence to a yet more melancholy doom."—STRZELECHI'S N. S. WALES, p.350.]

It is here that the native should be seen to be appreciated, in his native wilds, where he alone is lord of all around him. To those who have thus come into communication with the Aborigines, and have witnessed the fearless courage and proud demeanour which a life of independence and freedom always inspires, it cannot but be a matter of deep regret to see them gradually dwindling away and disappearing before the presence of Europeans. As the ravages of a flood destroy the country through which it takes its course, and which its deposit ought only to have fertilized, [Note 102 at end of para.] so the native, who ought to be improved by a contact with Europeans, is overwhelmed and swept away by their approach. In Van Diemen's Land the same result has been produced as at Sydney, but in a more extended and exterminating manner.[Note 103 at end of para.] There, instead of a few districts, the whole island is depopulated of its original inhabitants, and only thirty or forty individuals, the banished remnant of a once numerous people, are now existing as exiles at Flinders Island, to tell the tale of their expatriation. [Note 104 at end of para.] In Western Australia the same process is gradually but certainly going on among the tribes most in contact with the Europeans. In South Australia it is the same; and short as is the time that this province has been occupied as a British Colony, the results upon the Aborigines are but too apparent in their diminished numbers, in the great disproportion that has been produced between the sexes, and in the large preponderance of deaths over births. A miserably diseased condition, and the almost total absence of children, are immediate consequences of this contact with Europeans. The increase or diminution of the tribes can only be ascertained exactly in the different districts, by their being regularly mustered, and lists kept of the numbers and proportion of the sexes, births, deaths, etc.

[Note 102: "Hard indeed is the fate of the children of the soil, and one of the darkest enigmas of life lies in the degradation and decay wrought by the very civilization which should succour, teach, and improve."—ATHENAEUM.]

[Note 103: "That the Aboriginal Tasmanian was naturally mild and inoffensive in disposition, appears to be beyond doubt. A worm, however, will turn, and the atrocities which were perpetrated against these unoffending creatures may well palliate the indiscriminate, though heart-rending slaughter they entailed. Such was the character of the Tasmanian native before roused by oppression, and ere a continued and systematic hostility had arisen between the races—ere 'their hand was against every man, and every man's hand against them.'" — MARTYN'S COLONIAL MAGAZINE, May, 1840.]

[Note 104: “At the epoch of their deportation, in 1835, the number of the natives amounted to 210. Visited by me in 1842, that is, after the interval of seven years, they mustered only fifty-four individuals.” —STRZELECKI’S NEW SOUTH WALES, p. 352

Respecting the Aborigines of Van Diemen’s Land, who were thus forcibly removed, Mr. Chief Protector Robinson (who removed them) observes (Parliamentary Report, p. 198), “When the natives were all assembled at Flinders Island, in 1835, I took charge of them, and have continued to do so ever since. I did not find them retaining that ferocious character which they displayed in their own country; they shewed no hostility, nor even hostile recollection towards the whites. Unquestionably these natives assembled on the island were the same who had been engaged in the outrages I have spoken of; many of them, before they were removed, pointed out to me the spots where murders and other acts of violence had been committed; they made no secret of acknowledging their participation in such acts, and only considered them a just retaliation for wrongs done to them or their progenitors. On removal to the island they appeared to forget all these facts; they could not of course fail to remember them, but they never recurred to them.”]

In April, 1843, or only six and a half years after South Australia had first been occupied, the Protector of the Aborigines in Adelaide ascertained that the tribes, properly belonging to that neighbourhood, consisted of 150 individuals, in the following proportions, namely, 70 men, 39 women, and 41 children. Now, at the Murray, among a large number of natives who, until 1842, were comparatively isolated from Europeans, and among whom are frequently many different tribes, I found by an accurate muster every month at Moorunde for a period of three years, that the women, on an average, were equally numerous with the men, from which I infer that such is usually the case in their original and natural state. Taking this for granted, and comparing it with the proportions of the Adelaide tribe, as given above, we shall find that in six years and a half the females had diminished from an equality with the males, to from 70 to 80 per cent. less, and of course the tribe must have sustained also a corresponding diminution with respect to children.

[Note 105: This result seems to be generally borne out by the few accurate returns that have hitherto been made on the subject. In Mr. Protector Parker’s report for his district, to the north-west of Port Phillip (for January, 1843), that gentleman gives a census of 375 male natives, and 295 female, which gives an excess of about 26 per cent. of males over females. In 1834 Mr. Commissioner Lambie gives a census, for the district of Manero, of 416 males and 321 females, or an excess of the former over the latter of nearly 45 per cent. It would appear that the disproportion of the sexes increases in a ratio corresponding to the length of time a district has been occupied by settlers and their stock, and to the density of the European population residing in it. Official returns for four divisions of the Colony of New South Wales, give a decrease of the proportion of females to males of fifteen per cent. in two years. Vide Aborigines Protection Society Report, July, 1839, p. 69. In the same Report, p. 70, Mr. Threlkeld states, that the Official Report for one district gives only two women to 28 men, two boys, and no girls.]

Again, in 1844, the Protector ascertained from the records he had kept that, in the same tribe, there were, in four years, twenty-seven births and FIFTY deaths, which shews, beyond all doubt, the gradual but certain destruction that was going on among the tribe. If no means can be adopted to check the evil, it must eventually lead to their total extermination.

By comparing the twenty-seven births in four years with the number of women, thirty-nine, it appears that there would be annually only one child born among every six women: a result as unnatural as it is evidently attributable to the increased prostitution that has taken place, with regard both to Europeans and other native tribes, whom curiosity has attracted to the town, but whom the Adelaide tribe were not in the habit of meeting at all, or, at least, not in such familiar intercourse prior to the arrival of the white people. This single cause, with the

diseases and miseries which it entails upon the Aborigines, is quite sufficient to account for the paucity of births, and the additional number of deaths that now occur among them.

In the Moorunde statistics, given Chapter VI., the very small number of infants compared with the number of women is still more strongly illustrated; but in this case only those infants that lived and were brought up by their mothers to the monthly musters were marked down; many other births had, doubtless, taken place, where the children had died, or been killed, but of which no notice is taken, as it would have been impossible under the circumstances of such a mixture of tribes, and their constantly changing their localities, to have obtained an accurate account of all.

Under the circumstances of our intercourse with the Aborigines as at present constituted, the same causes which produced so exterminating an effect in Sydney and other places, are still going on in all parts of Australia occupied by Europeans, and must eventually lead to the same result, if no controlling measures can be adopted to prevent it.

Many attempts, upon a limited scale, have already been made in all the colonies, but none have in the least degree tended to check the gradual but certain extinction that is menacing this ill-fated people; nor is it in my recollection that throughout the whole length and breadth of New Holland, a single real or permanent convert to Christianity has yet been made amongst them, by any of the missionaries engaged in their instruction, many of whom have been labouring hopelessly for many years.

In New South Wales, one of the oldest and longest established missions in Australia was given up by the Rev. Mr. Threlkeld, after the fruitless devotion of many years of toil. [Note 106 at end of para.] Neither have the efforts hitherto made to improve the physical circumstances or social relations of the Aborigines been attended with any better success. None have yet been induced permanently to adopt our customs, or completely to give up their wandering habits, or to settle down fixedly in one place, and by cultivating the ground, supply themselves with the comforts and luxuries of life. It is not that the New Hollander is not as apt and intelligent as the men of any other race, or that his capacity for receiving instruction, or appreciating enjoyment is less; on the contrary, we have the fullest and most ample testimony from all who have been brought much into contact with this people that the very contrary is the case: a testimony that is completely borne out by the many instances on record, of the quickness with which natives have learned our language, or the facility with which temporarily they have accommodated themselves to our habits and customs.

[Note 106: Vide Parliamentary Reports on Australian Aborigines, 9th of August, 1844, pages 160 and 161.—"In submitting to this decision, it is impossible not to feel considerable disappointment to the expectations formerly hoped to be realized in the conversion of some at least of the Aborigines in this part of the colony, and not to express concern that so many years of constant attention appear to have been fruitlessly expended. It is however, perfectly apparent that the termination of the mission has arisen solely from the Aborigines becoming extinct in these districts, and the very few that remain elsewhere are so scattered, that it is impossible to congregate them for instruction; and when seen in the towns, they are generally unfit to engage in profitable conversation. The thousands of Aborigines, if ever they did exist in these parts, decreased to hundreds, the hundreds have lessened to tens, and the tens will dwindle to units before a very few years will have passed away."]

"This mission to the Aborigines has ceased to exist, not from want of support from the British Government, nor from the inclination of the agent, but purely from the Aborigines themselves becoming extinct in these parts; and in leaving this scene of much solitariness, privation, and trial, it is earnestly hoped that He who fixes the bounds of our habitation, apparently in Sydney for a season, will guide our feet through life to his glory, and provide support for a numerous family, so that the 'ministry be not blamed.'"]

On the natural intelligence of the native children, Mr. Moorhouse remarks, after several years practical experience:—

“They are as apt as European children so far as they have been tried, but they have not been put to abstract reasoning. Their perceptive powers are large, as they are much exercised in procuring food, etc. Anything requiring perception only is readily mastered, the alphabet will be known in a few lessons; figures are soon recognised, and the quantities they represent, but addition from figures alone always presents difficulties for a while, but in a little time, however, it is understood.”

Upon the same subject, Captain Grey remarks, vol. ii. p. 374.

“They are as apt and intelligent as any other race of men I am acquainted with; they are subject to the same affections, appetites, and passions as other men.”

Innumerable cases might be adduced, where native boys, or young men, and sometimes even females, have been taken into the employment of the settlers, and have lived with them as active and useful servants for many months, and occasionally even years. Unfortunately, however, in all such cases, they have eventually returned again to their savage life, and given up the customs and habits they had assumed. The same result has occurred among the many children who have been educated at the various schools established for their instruction, in the different Colonies. Numerous examples might be given of the great degree of proficiency made; and often, of many of the scholars being in such a state of forwardness and improvement, as reasonably to sanction the expectation, that they might one day become useful and intelligent members of the community: this hope has, however, hitherto, in almost every instance, been sooner or later disappointed, and they have again descended from the civilized to the savage state. What can be the causes then, that have operated to produce such unfavourable results?

If we admit, and it is admitted by all whose experience best qualifies them to give an opinion, that the Australian is fully equal in natural powers and intelligence, to the generality of mankind; it is very evident, that where so little success has hitherto attended any attempts to improve him, either morally or socially, there must either be some radical defects in the systems adopted, or some strongly counteracting causes to destroy their efficiency. I believe, that to both these circumstances, may be traced the results produced.

The following remarks, by Captain Grey, upon this subject, point out some of the evils to which the natives are subject, and in a great degree, account for the preference they appear to give to their own wild life and habits. (Vol. 2. pp. 367 to 371.) He says:—

“If we inquire into the causes which tend to detain them in their present depressed condition, we shall find that the chief one is—’prejudice’ The Australians have been most unfairly represented as a very inferior race, in fact as one occupying a scale in the creation which nearly places them on a level with the brutes, and some years must elapse, ere a prejudice so firmly rooted as this can be altogether eradicated, but certainly a more unfounded one never had possession of the public mind.

“Amongst the evils which the natives suffer in their present position, one is an uncertain and irregular demand for their labour, that is to say, they may one day have plenty of means for exerting their industry afforded them by the settlers, and the next their services are not required; so that they are necessarily compelled to have recourse to their former irregular and wandering habits.

“Another is the very insufficient reward for the services they render. As an example of this kind, I will state the instance of a man who worked during the whole season, as hard and as

well as any white man, at getting in the harvest for some settlers, and who only received bread, and sixpence a day, whilst the ordinary labourers would earn at least fifteen shillings. In many instances, they only receive a scanty allowance of food, so much so, that some settlers have told me that the natives left them because they had not enough to eat.

“The evil consequence of this is, that a native finding he can gain as much by the combined methods of hunting and begging, as he can by working, naturally prefers the former and much more attractive mode of procuring subsistence, to the latter one.

“Many of the natives have not only a good idea of the value of money, but even hoard it up for some particular purpose; several of them have shewn me their little treasure of a few shillings, and have told me it was their intention to save more until they had enough to buy a horse, a gun, or some wished-for article, but their improvidence has always got the better of their thriftiness, and this sum has eventually been spent in treating their friends to bread and rice.

“Another evil is the very extraordinary position in which they are placed with regard to two distinct sets of laws; that is they are allowed to exercise their own laws upon one another, and are again held amenable to British law where British subjects are concerned. Thus no protection is afforded them by the British law against the violence or cruelty of one of their own race, and the law has only been hitherto known to them as the means of punishment, but never as a code from which they can claim protection or benefit.

“The following instances will prove my assertion: In the month of October 1838, I saw early one morning some natives in the public street in Perth, in the act of murdering a native woman, close to the store of the Messrs. Habgood: many Europeans were present, amongst others a constable; but there was no interference on their part until eventually the life of the woman was saved by the courage of Mr. Brown, a gardener in Perth, who rushed in amongst the natives, and knocked down the man who was holding her; she then escaped into the house of the Messrs. Habgood, who treated the poor creature with the utmost humanity. She was, however, wounded in several places in the most severe and ghastly manner.

“A letter I received from Mr. A. Bussel, (a settler in the southern part of the colony,) in May, 1839, shews that the same scenes are enacted all over it. In this case, their cow-keeper, (the native whose burial is narrated at p. 330,) was speared by the others. He was at the time the hired servant of Europeans, performing daily a stated service for them; yet they slew him in open day-light, without any cause of provocation being given by him.

“Again, in October, 1838, the sister of a settler in the northern district, told me that shortly before this period, she had, as a female servant, a most interesting little native girl, not more than ten or eleven years of age. This girl had just learned all the duties belonging to her employment, and was regarded in the family as a most useful servant, when some native, from a spirit of revenge, murdered this inoffensive child in the most barbarous manner, close to the house; her screams were actually heard by the Europeans under whose protection, and in whose service she was living, but they were not in time to save her life. This same native had been guilty of many other barbarous murders, one of which he had committed in the district of the Upper Swan, in the actual presence of Europeans. In June, 1839, he was still at large, unmolested, even occasionally visiting Perth.

“Their fondness for the bush and the habits of savage life, is fixed and perpetuated by the immense boundary placed by circumstances between themselves and the whites, which no exertions on their part can overpass, and they consequently relapse into a state of hopeless passive indifference.

“I will state a remarkable instance of this:—The officers of the Beagle took away with them a native of the name of Miago, who remained absent with them for several months. I saw him on the North-west coast, on board the Beagle, apparently perfectly civilized; he waited at the gun-room mess, was temperate (never tasting spirits), attentive, cheerful, and remarkably clean in his person. The next time I saw him was at Swan River, where he had been left on the return of the Beagle. He was then again a savage, almost naked, painted all over, and had been concerned in several murders. Several persons here told me,—”you see the taste for a savage life was strong in him, and he took to the bush again directly.” Let us pause for a moment and consider.

“Miago, when he was landed, had amongst the white people none who would be truly friends of his,—they would give him scraps from their table, but the very outcasts of the whites would not have treated him as an equal,—they had no sympathy with him,—he could not have married a white woman,—he had no certain means of subsistence open to him,—he never could have been either a husband or a father, if he had lived apart from his own people;—where, amongst the whites, was he to find one who would have filled for him the place of his black mother, whom he is much attached to?—what white man would have been his brother?—what white woman his sister? He had two courses left open to him,—he could either have renounced all natural ties, and have led a hopeless, joyless life amongst the whites,—ever a servant,—ever an inferior being;—or he could renounce civilization, and return to the friends of his childhood, and to the habits of his youth. He chose the latter course, and I think that I should have done the same.”

Such are a few of the disadvantages the natives have to contend with, if they try to assimilate in their life and habits to Europeans, nor is there one here enumerated, of which repeated instances have not come under my own observation. If to these be added, the natural ties of consanguinity, the authority of parents, the influence of the example of relatives and friends, and the seducing attraction which their own habits and customs hold out to the young of both sexes; first, by their offering a life of idleness and freedom, to a people naturally indolent and impatient of restraint; and secondly, by their pandering to their natural passions: we shall no longer wonder that so little has been effected towards ameliorating their condition, or inducing them to adopt habits and customs that deprive them of those indulgences.

In New South Wales and Port Phillip, the Government have made many efforts in behalf of the Aborigines; for a series of years past, and at present, the sum of about ten thousand pounds, is annually placed upon the estimates, towards defraying the salaries of a Chief Protector, and several subordinate ones, and for other expenses connected with the natives.

[Note: Not included in the eBook, Table on pages 428–9: ABSTRACT OF EXPENDITURE IN N.S.W ON ACCOUNT OF THE ABORIGINES FROM 1821 TO 1842 INCLUSIVE.]

In Western Australia a sum of money is also devoted annually towards defraying the salaries of two Protectors, and other expenses connected with the department.

I am not, however, personally aware, what the particular arrangements may be that have latterly been adopted in either of these colonies, for the benefit of the Aborigines, or the degree of success which may have attended them. I believe, however, that in both places, more has been attempted, within the last three or four years, than had ever been the case before. What the eventual result may be it is impossible to tell, but with the past experience before me, I cannot persuade myself, that any real or permanent good will ever be effected, until the influence exercised over the young by the adults be destroyed, and they are freed from the contagious effects of their example, and until means are afforded them of supporting themselves in a new condition, and of forming those social ties and connections in an improved state, which they must otherwise be driven to seek for among the savage hordes, from which it is attempted to reclaim them.

In South Australia many efforts have been made in behalf of the Aborigines, and an anxious desire for their welfare has frequently been exhibited on the part of the Government, and of many of the colonists. For the year 1845 the sum of 820 pounds is noted in the estimates for the Aboriginal Department. This sum is distributed as follows:—

Salary of Protector 300 pounds Master of Native School at Walkerville 100 Matron of School at Native Location 20 Provisions 150 Donation to Lutheran Mission 100 Miscellaneous 150

Total 820 pounds

There are three native schools established in the province. The first is that at the native location in the town of Adelaide, commenced in December, 1839, by Mr. Klose, one of the Dresden missionaries. The average attendance of children has been about sixteen, all of whom have latterly been lodged as well as fed at the school. The progress made by the children may be stated to have been as follows: on the 16th February, 1844—

14 were able to read polysyllables. 2 were able to read monosyllables. 2 could repeat the cardinal numbers. 14 were in addition. 3 in subtraction. 9 in multiplication. 2 in division.

Most of the children could repeat the Lord's Prayer and Commandments, and they were able to narrate the history of the Creation, the fall of our first parents, and other portions of the Old and New Testament. A few were able to write these subjects to dictation. In geography many of the scholars knew the ordinary divisions of the earth, its shape, diameter, circumference, and the names of the continents, oceans, seas, gulfs, etc. etc. together with the general description of the inhabitants of each part, as to colour, etc. Of the girls, fourteen had been taught to sew, and have made upwards of fifty garments for themselves, besides several shirts for Europeans.

Mr. Klose receives as salary 33 pounds per annum from the Government, and a remittance from his society at Dresden. The matron of the establishment also receives 20 pounds from the Government. The average expense of provisions for each child per week, amounts to two shillings and ten pence. The cost of clothing each child per year is 2 pounds. Until very recently this school was taught in the native language; but English is now adopted, except in lecturing from Scripture, when the native language is still retained.

At Walkerville, about one mile from North Adelaide, another school has been established under the superintendence of Mr. Smith, since May, 1844. Up to October of the same year the average attendance of children had been sixty-three. In that short time the progress had been very satisfactory; all the children had passed from the alphabetical to the monosyllabic class, and most had mastered the multiplication table; eighteen could write upon the slate, and six upon paper; twelve girls had commenced sewing, and were making satisfactory progress.

They go four times in the week to the council chamber to be instructed by gratuitous teachers. On Sunday evening service is performed according to the Church of England by Mr. Fleming, and the children are said to be attentive and well-behaved. The Methodists of the New Connection have them also under spiritual instruction in the morning and afternoon of each Sabbath, assisted by persons of other religious denominations.

All instruction is given in English; their food is cooked by the elder children, (who also provide the firewood,) and distributed by themselves under the master's eye. The cook is said to take good care of himself, and certainly his appearance does not belie the insinuation, for he is by far the fattest boy in the lot. The school building is a plain, low cottage, containing a school-room, a sleeping-room for the male children, another for the female, and apartments for the master and mistress. There is also an old out-building attached, where the children

perform their ablutions in wet weather. Mr. and Mrs. Smith receive 100 pounds. per annum from the Colonial Government for their services. The children of this school have not yet been generally provided with other clothing than a small blanket each. The third school was only just commenced at Encounter Bay, where it has been established through the influence and exertions of Mr. Meyer, one of the missionaries. The Government give 20 pounds per annum, and the settlers of the neighbourhood 100 bushels of wheat, and some mutton. Six or eight children are expected to be lodged and boarded at this school, with the means at present existing.

Besides the establishment of schools, there is a Protector resident in Adelaide to take the management of the aboriginal department, to afford medical assistance and provisions to such of the aged or diseased as choose to apply for them, and to remunerate any natives who may render services to the Government, or the Protectorate. At Moorunde, upon the Murray, the natives are mustered once a month by the Resident magistrate, and two pounds and a half of flour issued to each native who chooses to attend. This is occasionally done at Port Lincoln, and has had a very beneficial effect. Once in the year, on the Queen's birthday, a few blankets are distributed to some of the Aborigines at Adelaide, Moorunde, Encounter Bay, and Port Lincoln, amounting in all to about 300. Four natives are also provisioned by the Government as attaches to the police force at different out-stations, and are in many respects very useful.

Exclusive of the Government exertions in behalf of the Aborigines, there are in the province four missionaries from the Lutheran Missionary Society at Dresden, two of whom landed in October 1838, and two in August 1840. Of these one is stationed at the native location, and (as has already been stated) acts as schoolmaster. A second is living twelve miles from Adelaide, upon a section of land, bought by the Dresden Society, with the object of endeavouring to settle the natives, and inducing them to build houses upon the property, but the plan seems altogether a failure. It was commenced in November 1842, but up to November 1844 natives had only been four months at the place; and on one occasion a period of nine months elapsed, without their ever visiting it at all, although frequently located at other places in the neighbourhood.

A third missionary is stationed at Encounter Bay, and is now conducting a school, mainly established through his own exertions and influence.

The fourth is stationed at Port Lincoln. All the four missionaries have learned the dialects of the tribes where they are stationed, and three have published vocabularies and grammars as the proof of their industry.

Such is the general outline of the efforts that have hitherto been made in South Australia, and the progress made. It may be well to inquire, what are likely to be the results eventually under the existing arrangements. From the first establishment of the schools, until June 1843, the children were only instructed at the location, their food was given to them to take to the native encampments to cook, and they were allowed to sleep there at night. The natural consequence was, that the provisions intended for the sonolars were shared by the other natives, whilst the evil influence of example, and the jeers of their companions, did away with any good impression produced by their instruction. I have myself, upon going round the encampments in Adelaide by night, seen the school-children ridiculed by the elder boys, and induced to join them in making a jest of what they had been taught during the day to look upon as sacred.

A still more serious evil, resulting from this system was, that the children were more completely brought into the power, and under the influence of the parents, and thus their natural taste for an indolent and rambling life, was constantly kept up. The boys naturally became anxious to participate and excel in the sports, ceremonies, or pursuits of their equals, and the girls were compelled to yield to the customs of their tribe, and break through every lesson of decency or morality, which had been inculcated.

Since June, 1843, the system has so far been altered, that the children, whilst under instruction, are boarded and lodged at the school houses, and as far as practicable, the boys and girls are kept separate. There are still, however, many evils attending the present practice, most of which arise from the inadequacy of the funds, applicable to the Aborigines, and which must be removed before any permanent good can be expected from the instruction given. The first of these, and perhaps one of the greatest, is that the adult natives make their encampments immediately in the neighbourhood of the schools, whilst the children, when out of school, roam in a great measure at will, or are often employed collecting firewood, etc. about the park lands, a place almost constantly occupied by the grown up natives, there is consequently nearly as much intercourse between the school children and the other natives, and as great an influence exercised over them by the parents and elders, as if they were still allowed to frequent the camps.

Another evil is, that no inducement is held out to the parents, to put their children to school, or to allow them to remain there. They cannot comprehend the advantage of having their children clothed, fed, or educated, whilst they lose their services; on the contrary, they find that all the instruction, advice, or influence of the European, tends to undermine among the children their own customs and authority, and that when compelled to enforce these upon them, they themselves incur the odium of the white men. Independently, however, of this consideration, and of the natural desire of a parent to have his family about him, he is in reality a loser by their absence, for in many of the methods adopted for hunting, fishing, or similar pursuits, the services even of young children are often very important. For the deprivation of these, which he suffers when his children are at school, he receives no equivalent, and it is no wonder therefore, that by far the great majority of natives would prefer keeping their children to travel with them, and assist in hunting or fishing. It is a rare occurrence, for parents to send, or even willingly [Note 107 at end of para.] to permit their children to go to school, and the masters have consequently to go round the native encampments to collect and bring away the children against their wishes. This is tacitly submitted to at the time, but whenever the parents remove to another locality, the children are informed of it, and at once run away to join them; so that the good that has been done in school, is much more rapidly undone at the native camp. I have often heard the parents complain indignantly of their children being thus taken; and one old man who had been so treated, but whose children had run away and joined him again, used vehemently to declare, that if taken any more, he would steal some European children instead, and take them into the bush to teach them; he said he could learn them something useful, to make weapons and nets, to hunt, or to fish, but what good did the Europeans communicate to his children?

[Note 107: "Mr. Gunter expressed very decidedly his opinion, that the blacks do not like Mr. Watson, and that they especially do not like him, SINCE HE HAS TAKEN CHILDREN FROM THEM BY FORCE: he would himself like to have some children under his care, IF HE COULD PROCURE THEM BY PROPER MEANS."—Memorandum respecting Wellington Valley, by Sir G. Gipps, November 1840.]

A third, and a very great evil, is that, after a native boy or girl has been educated and brought up at the school, no future provision is made for either, nor have they the means of following any useful occupation, or the opportunity of settling themselves in life, or of forming any domestic ties or connections whatever, save by falling back again upon the rude and savage life from which it was hoped education would have weaned them. It is unnatural, therefore, to suppose that under existing circumstances they should ever do other than relapse into their former state; we cannot expect that individuals should isolate themselves completely from their kind, when by so doing they give up for ever all hope of forming any of those domestic ties that can render their lives happy.

Such being the very limited, and perhaps somewhat equivocal advantages we offer the Aborigines, we can hardly expect that much or permanent benefit can accrue to them; and

ought not to be disappointed if such is not the case. [Note 108 at end of para.] At present it is difficult to say what are the advantages held out to the natives by the schools, since they have no opportunity of turning their instruction to account, and must from necessity relapse again to the condition of savages, when they leave school. Taken as children from their parents, against the wishes of the latter, there are not means sufficient at the schools for keeping them away from the ill effects of the example and society of the most abandoned of the natives around. They are not protected from the power or influence of their parents and relatives, who are always encouraging them to leave, or to practise what they have been taught not to do. The good that is instilled one day is the next obliterated by evil example or influence. They have no future openings in life which might lead them to become creditable and useful members of society; and however well disposed a child may be, there is but one sad and melancholy resource for it at last, that of again joining its tribe, and becoming such as they are. Neither is there that disinclination on the part of the elder children to resume their former mode of life and customs that might perhaps have been expected; for whilst still at school they see and participate enough in the sports, pleasures, or charms of savage life to prevent their acquiring a distaste to it; and when the time arrives for their departure, they are generally willing and anxious to enter upon the career before them, and take their part in the pursuits or duties of their tribe. Boys usually leave school about fourteen, to join in the chase, or learn the practice of war. Girls are compelled to leave about twelve, through the joint influence of parents and husbands, to join the latter; and those only who have been acquainted with the life of slavery and degradation a native female is subject to, can at all form an opinion of the wretched prospect before her.

[Note 108: The importance of a change in the system and policy adopted towards the Aborigines, and the urgent necessity for placing the schools upon a different and better footing, appears from the following extract from a despatch from Governor Hutt to Lord Stanley, 21st January, 1843, in which the difficulties and failure attending the present system are stated. Mr. Hutt says (Parliamentary Reports, p. 416). "It is to the schools, of course, that we must look for any lasting benefit to be wrought amongst the natives, and I regret most deeply the total failure of the school instituted at York, and the partial failure of that at Guilford, both of which at FIRST promised so well. The fickle disposition of these people, in youth as in older years, incapacitate them from any long continued exertions, whether of learning or labour, whilst from the roving lives of the parents in search of food, the children, if received into the schools, must be entirely supported at the public expense. This limits the sphere of our operations, by restricting the number of the scholars who can thus be taken charge of. Through the kindly co-operation of the Wesleyan Society at Perth, and the zealous pastoral exertions of the Rev. Mr. King at Fremantle, the schools at both these places have been efficiently maintained; but in the country, and apart from the large towns, to which the Aborigines have an interest in resorting in large numbers for food and money, the formation of schools of a lasting character will be for some time a work of doubt and of difficulty."]

There are two other points connected with the natives to which I will briefly advert: the one, relative to the language in which the school children are taught, the other, the policy, or otherwise, of having establishments for the natives in the immediate vicinity of a town, or of a numerous European population.

With respect to the first, I may premise, that for the first four years the school at the location in Adelaide was conducted entirely in the native tongue. To this there are many objections.

First, the length of time and labour required for the instructor to master the language he has to teach in.

Secondly, the very few natives to whom he can impart the advantages of instruction, as an additional school, and another teacher would be required for every tribe speaking a different dialect.

Thirdly, the sudden stop that would be put to all instruction if the preceptor became ill, or died, as no one would be found able to supply his place in a country where, from the number, and great differences of the various dialects, there is no inducement to the public to learn any of them.

Fourthly, that by the children being taught in any other tongue than that generally spoken by the colonists, they are debarred from the advantage of any casual instruction or information which they might receive from others than their own teachers, and from entering upon duties or relations of any kind with the Europeans among whom they are living, but whose language they cannot speak.

Fifthly, that, by adhering to the native language, the children are more deeply confirmed in their original feelings and prejudices, and more thoroughly kept under the influence and direction of their own people.

Among the colonists themselves there have scarcely been two opinions upon the subject, and almost all have felt, that the system originally adopted was essentially wrong. It has recently been changed, and the English is now adopted instead of the native language. I should not have named this subject at all, had I not been aware that the missionaries themselves still retain their former impressions, and that although they have yielded to public opinion on this point, they have not done so from a conviction of its utility.

The second point to which I referred,—the policy, or otherwise, of having native establishments near a populous European settlement, is a much more comprehensive question, and one which might admit, perhaps, of some reasons on both sides, although, upon the whole, those against it greatly preponderate.

The following are the reasons I have usually heard argued for proximity to town.

1st. It is said that the children sooner acquire the English language by mixing among the towns people. This, however, to say the least, is a very negative advantage, for in such a contact it is far more probable that they will learn evil than good; besides, if means were available to enable the masters to keep their scholars under proper restrictions, there would no longer be even the opportunity for enjoying this very equivocal advantage.

2nd. It is stated that the natives are sooner compelled to give up their wandering habits, as there is no game near a town. This might be well enough if they followed any better employment, but the contrary is the case; and with respect to the school-children, the restriction would be the correction of a bad habit, which they ought never to be allowed to indulge in, and one which might soon be done away with entirely if sufficient inducement were held out to the parents to put their children to school, and allow them to remain there.

3rd. It is thought that a greater number of children can be collected in the vicinity of a town than elsewhere. This may perhaps be the case at present, but would not continue so if means were used to congregate the natives in their own proper districts.

4th. It is said that provisions and clothing are cheaper in town and more easily procured than elsewhere. This is the only apparently valid reason of the whole, but it is very questionable whether it is sufficient to counterbalance the many evils which may result from too close a contiguity to town, and especially so as far as the adults are concerned. With respect to the children, if kept within proper bounds, and under proper discipline, it is of little importance where they may be located, and perhaps a town may for such purposes be sometimes the best. With the older natives however it is far different, and the evils resulting to them from too close contact with a large European population, are most plainly apparent; in,—

1st. The immorality, which great as it is among savages in their natural state, is increased in a tenfold degree when encouraged and countenanced by Europeans, and but little opening is left for the exercise of missionary influence or exertions.

2nd. The dreadful state of disease which is superinduced, and which tends, in conjunction with other causes as before stated, to bring about the gradual extinction of the race.

3rd. The encouragement a town affords to idleness, and the opportunities to acquire bad habits, such as begging, pilfering, drinking, etc. the effects of which must also have a very bad moral tendency upon the children.

The town of Adelaide appears capable of supporting about six hundred natives on an average. Many of these obtain their food by going errands, by carrying wood or water, or by performing other light work of a similar kind. Many are supported by the offal of a place where so much animal food is consumed; but by far the greater number are dependent upon charity, and some few even extort their subsistence from women or children by threats, if they have the opportunity of doing so without fear of detection.

The number of natives usually frequenting the town of Adelaide averages perhaps 300, but occasionally there are even as many as 800. These do not belong to the neighbourhood of the town itself, for the Adelaide tribe properly so called only embraces about 150 individuals. The others come in detached parties from almost all parts of the colony. Some from the neighbourhood of Bonney's Well, or 120 miles south; some from the Broughton, or 120 miles north; some from the upper part of the Murray, or nearly 200 miles east. Thus are assembled at one spot sometimes portions of tribes the most distant from each other, and whose languages, customs and ceremonies are quite dissimilar. If any proof were wanted to shew the power of European influence in removing prejudices or effecting a total revulsion of their former habits and customs, a stronger one could scarcely be given than this motley assembly of "all nations and languages." In their primitive state such a meeting could never take place; the distant tribes would never have dreamt of attempting to pass through the country of the intermediate ones, nor would the latter have allowed a passage if it had been attempted.

I have remarked that in Adelaide many of the natives support themselves by light easy work, or going errands; there are also a dozen, or fourteen young men employed regularly as porters to storekeepers with whom they spend two-thirds of their time, and make themselves very useful. At harvest time many natives assist the settlers. At Encounter Bay during 1843, from 70 to 100 acres of wheat or barley, were reaped by them; at Adelaide from 50 to 60 acres, and at Lynedoch Valley they aided in cutting and getting in 200 acres. Other natives have occasionally employed themselves usefully in a variety of ways, and one party of young men collected and delivered to a firm in town five tons of mimosa bark up to December 1843. At the native location during the year 1842, three families of natives assisted by the school-children, had dug with the spade the ground, and had planted and reaped more than one acre of maize, one acre of potatoes, and half an acre of melons, besides preparing ground for the ensuing year. On the Murray River native shepherds and stock-keepers have hitherto been employed almost exclusively, and have been found to answer well. Most of the settlers in that district have one or more native youths constantly living at their houses.

In concluding an account of the present state and prospects of the Aborigines and of the efforts hitherto made on their behalf, I may state that I am fully sensible that to put the schools upon a proper footing and to do away with the serious disadvantages I have pointed out as at present attending them, or to adopt effective means for assembling, feeding, or instructing the natives in their own respective districts would involve a much greater expenditure than South Australia has hitherto been able to afford from her own resources; and I have therefore called attention to the subject, not for the purpose of censuring what it is impossible to remedy without means; but in the sincere and earnest hope that an interest in

behalf of a people who are generally much misrepresented, and who are certainly in justice entitled to expect at our hands much more than they receive, will be excited in the breasts of the British public, who are especially their debtors on many accounts.

I am aware that the subject of the Aborigines is one of a very difficult and embarrassing nature in many respects, and I know that evils and imperfections will occasionally occur, in spite of the utmost efforts to prevent them. No system of policy can be made to suit all circumstances connected with a subject so varied and perplexing, and especially so, where every new arrangement and all benevolent intentions are restrained or limited, by the deficiency of pecuniary means to carry out the object in a proper manner. Already the subject of apprenticing the natives, or teaching them a trade, has been under the consideration of the Government, but has been delayed from being brought into operation by the want of funds sufficient to carry the object into effect. It is intended, I believe, to make the experiment as soon as means are available for that purpose.

My duties as an officer of the Government having been principally connected with the more numerous, but distant tribes of the interior, I can bear testimony to the anxious desire of the Government to promote the welfare of the natives.

I have equal pleasure in recording the great interest that prevails on their behalf among their numerous friends in the colonies, and the general kindness and good feeling that have been exhibited towards them on the part of a large proportion of the colonists of Australia. It is in the hope that this good feeling may be promoted and strengthened that I have been led to enter into the details of the preceding pages. In bringing before the public instances of a contrary conduct or feeling, I by no means wish to lead to the impression that such are now of very frequent or general occurrence, and I trust my motives may not be misunderstood. My sole, my only wish has been to bring about an improvement in the terms of intercourse, which subsists between the settlers and the Aborigines. Whilst advocating the cause of the latter, I am not insensible to the claims of the former, who leaving their native country and their friends, cheerfully encounter the inconveniences, toils, privations, and dangers which are necessarily attendant upon founding new homes in the remote and trackless wilds of other climes. Strongly impressed with the advantages, and the necessity of colonization, I am only anxious to mitigate its concomitant evils, and by effecting an amelioration in the treatment and circumstances of the Aborigines, point out the means of rendering the residence or pursuits of the settler among an uncivilized community, less precarious, and less hazardous than they have been. My object has been to shew the result, I may almost say, the necessary result of the system at present in force, when taking possession of and occupying a country where there are indigenous races. By shewing the complete failure of all efforts hitherto made, to prevent the oppression and eventual extinction of these unfortunate people, I would demonstrate the necessity of remodelling the arrangements made on their behalf, and of adopting a more equitable and liberal system than any we have yet attempted.

I believe that by far the greater majority of the settlers in all the Australian Colonies would hail with real pleasure, the adoption of any measures calculated to remove the difficulties, which at present beset our relations with the Aborigines; but to be effectual, these measures, at the same time that they afford, in some degree, compensation and support to the dispossessed and starving native—must equally hold out to the settler and the stockholder that security and protection, which he does not now possess, but which he is fairly entitled to expect, under the implied guarantee given to him by the Government, when selling to him his land, or authorizing him to locate in the more remote districts of the country.

From a long experience, and an attentive observation of what has been going on around me, I am perfectly satisfied, that unless some great change be made in our system, things will go on exactly as they have done, and in a few years more not a native will be left to tell the tale of the wrongs and sufferings of his unhappy race. I am equally convinced that all one-sided

legislation—all measures having reference solely to the natives must fail. The complete want of success attending the protecting system, and all other past measures, clearly shew, that unless the interests of the two classes can be so interwoven and combined, that both may prosper together; no real good can be hoped for from our best efforts to ameliorate the condition of the savage. In all future plans it is evident that the native must have the inducements and provocations to crime destroyed or counteracted, as far as it may be practicable to effect this, and the settler must be convinced that it is his interest to treat the native with kindness and consideration, and must be able to feel that he is no longer exposed to risk of life or property for injuries or aggressions, which, as an individual, he has not induced.

I have now nearly discharged the duty I have undertaken—a duty which my long experience among the natives, and an intimate acquaintance with their peculiarities, habits, and customs, has in a measure almost forced upon me. In fulfilling it, I have been obliged to enter at some length upon the subject, to give as succinct an account as I could of the unfavourable impressions that have often, but unjustly, been entertained of the New Hollanders: of the difficulties and disadvantages they have laboured under, of the various relations that have subsisted, or now subsist between them and the colonists, of the different steps that have been adopted by the Government or others, to ameliorate their condition, and of the degree of success or otherwise that has attended these efforts. I have stated, that from the result of my own experience and observation, for a long series of years past, from a practical acquaintance with the character and peculiarities of the Aborigines, and after a deliberate and attentive consideration of the measures that have been hitherto pursued, I have unwillingly been forced to the conviction, that some great and radical defect has been common to all; that we have not hitherto accomplished one single, useful, or permanent result; and that unless a complete change in our system of policy be adopted for the future, there is not the slightest hope of our efforts being more successful in times to come, than they have been in times past. That I am not alone or singular in the view which I take on this subject, may be shewn from various sources, but most forcibly from the opinions or statements of those, who from being upon the spot, and personally acquainted with the real facts of the case, may be supposed to be most competent to form just conclusions, and most worthy of having weight attached to their opinions. The impression on the public mind in the colonies, with respect to the general effect of the measures that have heretofore been adopted, may be gathered from the many opinions or quotations to which I have already referred in my remarks; many others might be adduced, if necessary, but one or two will suffice.

The following extract is from a speech by A. Forster, Esq. at a meeting held to celebrate the anniversary of the South Australian Missionary Society, on the 6th September, 1843, and at which the Governor of the Colony presided:—

“This colony had been established for nearly seven years, and during the whole of that time the natives had been permitted to go about the streets in a state of nudity. [Note 109 at end of para.] This was not only an outrage on decency and propriety, but it was demoralising to the natives themselves. Like Adam, after having come in contact with the tree of knowledge, they had begun to see their own nakedness, and were ashamed of it. If they could give them a nearer approach to humanity by clothing them, if they could make them look like men, they would then, perhaps, begin to think like men. What he complained of was, not that they were in a low and miserable condition, but that no effort had been made to rescue them from that condition.”

[Note 109: And yet a law is passed, subjecting natives, who appear thus, to punishment!—How are they to clothe themselves?]

“The circumstances, too, of the aborigines called upon them for increased exertion. They were wasting away with disease—they were dying on the scaffold—they were being shot

down in mistake for native dogs, and their bleeding and ghastly heads had been exhibited on poles, as scare-crows to their fellows."

The report of the Missionary Society, read on the same occasion, says,

"Though it is undeniable that there is much to discourage in the small results which can yet be reckoned from these efforts, and a variety of secondary means might be brought to bear with great advantage on the condition of the natives, still we must exercise faith in the power of the Spirit of God, over the most savage soul, in subduing the wicked passions and inclining the heart unto wisdom by exalted views of a future state, and of the divine character and will."

Captain Grey's opinion of the little good that had ever been accomplished, may be gathered from the following quotation, and which is fully as applicable to the state of the natives in 1844, as it was in 1841. Vol. ii. p. 366, he says,

"I wish not to assert, that the natives have been often treated with wanton cruelty, but I do not hesitate to say, that no real amelioration of their condition has been effected, and that much of negative evil, and indirect injury has been inflicted on them."

Upon the same subject, the Committee of Management of the Native School at Perth, Swan River, Western Australia, state in their 3rd Annual Report, dated 1844.

"With regard to the physical condition of the native children, and those who are approaching to mature life, it may be observed, that they are somewhat improving, though slowly, we trust surely. We find that to undo is a great work; to disassociate them from their natural ideas, habits, and practices which are characteristic of the bush life, is a greater difficulty, for notwithstanding the provisions of sleeping berths in good rooms, also of tables, etc. for their use, and which are peculiar to civilised life, and with which they are associated, yet they naturally verge towards, and cling to aboriginal education, and hence to squat on the sand to eat, to sleep a night in the bush, to have recourse to a Byly—a-duck man for ease in sickness; these to them seem reliefs and enjoyments from these restraints which civilized life entails upon them."

"With regard to the mental improvement of the native children, we cannot say much."

"As to the religious state of the pupils in the institution we have signs, improvements, and encouragements, which say to us, 'Go on.'"

The following quotation from Count Strzelecki's work only just published (1845), shews the opinion of that talented and intelligent traveller, after visiting various districts of New South Wales, Port Phillip, Van Diemen's Land, and Flinders' Island, and after a personal acquaintance with, and experience among the Aborigines:—

"Thus, in New South Wales, since the time that the fate of the Australasian awoke the sympathies of the public, neither the efforts of the missionary, nor the enactments of the Government, and still less the Protectorate of the "Protectors," have effected any good. The attempts to civilize and christianize the Aborigines, from which the preservation and elevation of their race was expected to result, HAVE UTTERLY FAILED, though it is consolatory, even while painful, to confess, that NEITHER THE ONE NOR THE OTHER ATTEMPT HAS BEEN CARRIED INTO EXECUTION, WITH THE SPIRIT WHICH ACCORDS WITH ITS PRINCIPLES."

With such slight encouragement in colonies where the best results are supposed to have been obtained, and with instances of complete failure in others, it is surely worth while to inquire, why there has been such a signal want of success?—and whether or not any means can be

devised that may hold out better hopes for the future? I cannot and I would not willingly believe, that the question is a hopeless one. The failure of past measures is no reason that future ones should not be more successful, especially when we consider, that all past efforts on behalf of the Aborigines have entirely overlooked the wrongs and injuries they are suffering under from our mere presence in their country, whilst none have been adapted to meet the exigencies of the peculiar relations they are placed in with regard to the colonists. The grand error of all our past or present systems—the very *fons et origo mali* appears to me to consist in the fact, that we have not endeavoured to blend the interests of the settlers and Aborigines together; and by making it the interest of both to live on terms of kindness and good feeling with each, bring about and cement that union and harmony which ought ever to subsist between people inhabiting the same country. So far, however, from our measures producing this very desirable tendency, they have hitherto, unfortunately, had only a contrary effect. By our injustice and oppression towards the natives, we have provoked them to retaliation and revenge; whilst by not affording security and protection to the settlers, we have driven them to protect themselves. Mutual distrusts and mutual misunderstandings have been the necessary consequence, and these, as must ever be the case, have but too often terminated in collisions or atrocities at which every right-thinking mind must shudder. To prevent these calamities for the future; to check the frightful rapidity with which the native tribes are being swept away from the earth, and to render their presence amidst our colonists and settlers, not as it too often hitherto has been, a source of dread and danger, but harmless, and to a certain extent, even useful and desirable, is an object of the deepest interest and importance, both to the politician and to the philanthropist. I have strong hopes, that means may be devised, to bring about, in a great measure, these very desirable results; and I would suggest, that such means only should be tried, as from being just in principle, and equally calculated to promote the interests of both races, may, in their practical adoption, hold out the fairest prospect of efficacy and success.

Chapter IX.

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT OF SYSTEM ADOPTED TOWARDS THE NATIVES.

In the preceding chapters I have given a general outline of the character, manners, and customs of the Aborigines of Australia, and of the effects produced upon them by a contact with civilization.

I have thus endeavoured to lay before the public their present state and future prospects, and as far as I am able, have attempted to explain what appear to me the reasons that so little success has hitherto attended Missionary, or other efforts, in their behalf. I would sincerely hope, that the accounts which I have given, may not be altogether useless; but that a certain knowledge of the real position of the natives, of the just claims they have upon us, and of the little prospect that exists of any real or permanent good being effected for them, until a great alteration takes place in our system, and treatment, may be the means of attracting attention to their condition, and of enlisting the sympathy of my fellow-countrymen in their cause.

Englishmen have ever been ready to come forward to protect the weak, or the oppressed; nor could they lend their aid to promote a greater, or a nobler work, than that of endeavouring, to arrest the decay, and avert the destruction which at present threatens the aboriginal races of our Australian colonies; and to try at least to bring within the pale of Christianity and civilization, a people hitherto considered as the lowest, and most irreclaimable of mankind, but whose natural capabilities and endowments, are, I feel assured, by no means inferior to those of the most favoured nations.

I shall now briefly suggest such alterations and additions, in the system of instruction and policy adopted towards them, as appear to me likely to prove beneficial.

I am aware, that in carrying out the improvements I propose, a greatly increased expenditure on behalf of the natives would be necessary, beyond what has hitherto been allowed by any of the Colonial Governments.

It appears to me, however, that they are justly entitled to expect, at our hands, some compensation for the injuries our presence unavoidably inflicts, and some alleviation of the consequent miseries they are suffering under.

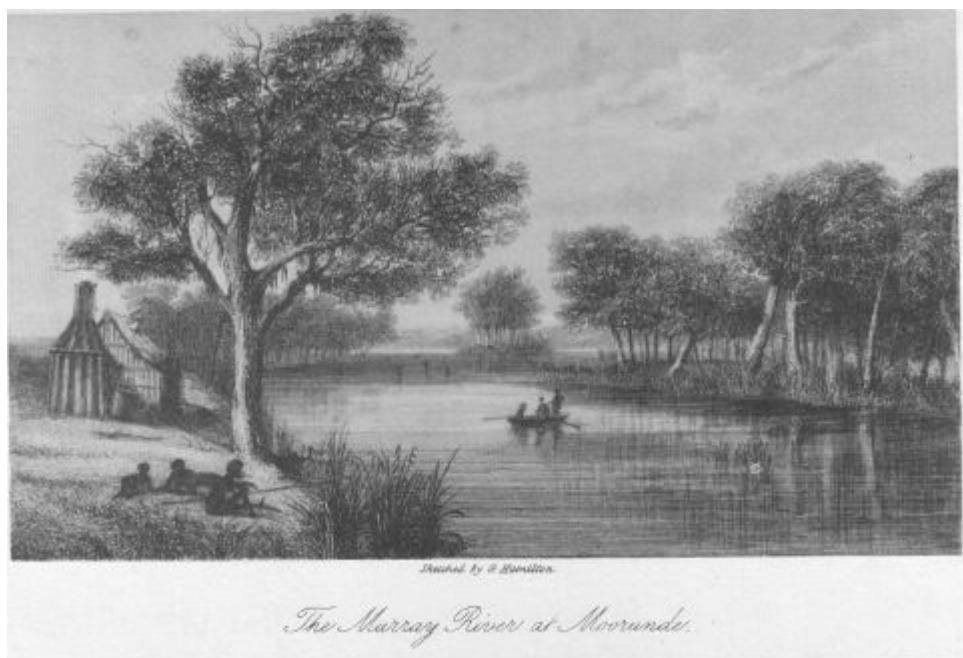
If we are sincere in our desires and efforts to promote the improvement, or prevent the decay of this unfortunate people, we are bound to make our measures sufficiently comprehensive to hold out some reasonable hope of success, otherwise our labour and money are only thrown away.

I do not believe that there is any one practically acquainted with the present state of our relations with the Aborigines, and the system adopted towards them, its working, defects, and inaptitude to overcome opposing difficulties, who would conscientiously assert that there is the least prospect of any greater benefits resulting in future than have been realized up to the present time.

There is another reason, independently of justice or humanity, one which, with some, may perhaps have more weight, as a motive for extending and amending our policy towards the natives. I mean self-interest. If our measures were calculated to afford them that protection which we claim for ourselves; and in place of those resources we have deprived them of, to offer to them a certain and regular supply of food in their respective districts, their wandering habits would be partially restrained, and a degree of influence and authority acquired over the whole aboriginal population, in contact with Europeans, which would counteract their natural

propensities. The flocks and herds of the settlers, and the lives of his family and servants, would be as unmolested and uninjured as among our own people. There would no longer occur those irritating aggressions, or bloody retaliations, which have too often taken place heretofore, between the black and the white man; and the misfortune of always having the border districts in a state of excitement and alarm, would be avoided, whilst the expense and inconvenience of occasionally sending large parties of military and police, to coerce or punish transgressors that they can rarely meet with, would be altogether dispensed with.

Unfortunately, the system I propose has been so little tried in Australia, that but few instances of its practical results can be adduced. There is one instance, however, which, from its coming nearer to it than any other, may serve to exemplify the success that might be expected. The case I allude to, is that of the establishment of the Government post at Moorunde, upon the Murray, in October 1841, by His Excellency Governor Grey. The circumstances which led to the formation of this post, arose from the disturbed and dangerous state the river route from New South Wales was in at the time, from the fearful losses that had occurred both of life and property, and the dread entertained by many, that the out-stations, which were formed along the line of hills fronting the Murray, would be subject to irruptions from the natives.



Murray River at Moorunde

Between the 16th of April, and 27th of August, or in about four months, four several affrays had taken place between the Aborigines and Europeans, in which many of the latter had been killed, and stock, drays, and other property, had been taken to a great value, (in one instance alone amounting to 5,000 sheep, besides drays and stores); on the other hand the sacrifice of native life had been very great, and was admitted in one case, to have amounted to thirty individuals, exclusive of many who were perhaps mortally wounded. Four different parties had been sent up the river during this short period, to punish aggressions, or protect property. In one of these the Europeans were worsted and driven back by the natives, in another a number amounting to sixty-eight Europeans, were absent for upwards of six weeks, at an immense expense, and were then obliged to return without bringing in a single culprit from the offending tribes.

[Note 110: In this latter case, the Commissioner of Police, and the greater number of his men, accompanied the expedition, leaving of course the colony unprotected, and ordinary civil

arrangements at a stand still until their return. I have already remarked, the little chance there is, of either the police or military ever succeeding in capturing native offenders, and how very frequently it has occurred, that in their attempts to do so, either through mistake, or from mismanagement, they have very often been guilty of most serious and lamentable acts of injury and aggression upon the innocent and the unoffending. As a mere matter of policy, or financial arrangement, I believe it would in the long run, be prudent and economical, to adopt a liberal and just line of treatment towards the Aborigines. I believe by this means, we should gain a sufficient degree of influence, to induce them always to GIVE UP OFFENDERS THEMSELVES; and I believe that this is the ONLY MEANS by which we can ever hope to ensure their CAPTURE.]

The line of route had become unsafe and dangerous for any party coming from New South Wales; a feeling of bitter hostility, arising from a sense of injury and aggression, had taken possession both of the natives and the Europeans, and it was evident for the future, that if the European party was weak, the natives would rob and murder them, and if otherwise, that they would commit wholesale butchery upon the natives. It was to remedy this melancholy state of affairs, that the Government station at Moorunde was established, and his Excellency the Governor, did me the honour to confide to my management the carrying out the objects proposed.

The instructions I received, and the principles upon which I attempted to carry out those instructions, were exclusively those of conciliation and kindness. I made it my duty to go personally amongst the most distant and hostile tribes, to explain to them that the white man wished to live with them, upon terms of amity, and that instead of injuring, he was most anxious to hold out the olive branch of peace.

By the liberality of the Government, I had it in my power once every month, to assemble all the natives who chose to collect, whether from near or more distant tribes, and to give to each a sufficiency of flour to last for about two days, and once in the year, at the commencement of winter, to bestow upon some few of the most deserving, blankets as a protection against the cold.

How far success attended the system that was adopted, or the exertions that were made, it is scarcely perhaps becoming in me to say: where the object, however, is simply and solely to try to benefit the Aborigines, and by contrasting the effects of different systems, that have been adopted towards them, to endeavour to recommend the best, I must, even at the risk of being deemed egotistical, point out some of the important and beneficial results that accrued at Moorunde.

In the first place, I may state that the dread of settling upon the Murray, has so far given place to confidence, that from Wellington (near the Lake), to beyond the Great South Bend, a distance of more than 100 miles, the whole line of river is now settled and occupied by stock, where, in 1841, there was not a single European, a herd of cattle, or a flock of sheep; nay, the very natives who were so much feared then, are looked upon now as an additional inducement to locate, since the services of the boys or young men, save in great measure the expense of European servants. There are few residents on the Murray, who do not employ one or more of these people, and at many stations, I have known the sheep or cattle, partially, and in some instances, wholly attended to by them.

For three years I was resident at Moorunde, and during the whole of that time, up to November, 1844, not a single case of serious aggression, either on the persons or property of Europeans had ever occurred, and but very few offences even of a minor character. The only crime of any importance that was committed in my neighbourhood, was at a sheep station, about 25 miles to the westward, where some few sheep were stolen, by a tribe of natives during the absence or neglect of the men attending them. By a want of proper care and

precaution, temptation was thrown in the way of the natives, but even then, it was only some few of the young men who were guilty of the offence; none of the elder or more influential members of the tribe, having had any thing to do with it. Neither did the tribe belong to the Murray river, although they occasionally came down there upon visits. There was no evidence to prove that the natives had stolen the sheep at all; the only fact which could be borne witness to, was that so many sheep were missing, and it was supposed the natives had taken them. As soon as I was made acquainted with the circumstances, I made every inquiry among the tribe suspected, and it was at once admitted by the elder men that the youths had been guilty of the offence. At my earnest solicitations, and representations of the policy of so doing, the culprits, five in number, **WERE BROUGHT IN AND DELIVERED UP BY THEIR TRIBE.** No evidence could be procured against them, and after remanding them from time to time as a punishment, I was obliged to discharge them.

I may now remark, that upon inquiry into the case, and in examining witnesses against the natives, it came out in evidence, that at the same station, and not long before, a native **HAD BEEN FIRED AT**, (with what effect did not appear,) simply because he **SEEMED** to be going towards the sheep-folds, which were a long way from the hut, and were directly in the line of route of any one either passing towards Adelaide, or to any of the more northern stations. Another case occurred about the same time, and at the same station, where an intelligent and well-conducted native, belonging to Moorunde, was sent by a gentleman at the Murray to a surgeon, living about sixty miles off, with a letter, and for medicines. The native upon reaching this station, which he had to pass, was **ASSAULTED AND OPPOSED BY A MAN, ARMED WITH A MUSKET**, and if not fired at, (which he said he was,) was at least intimidated, and driven back, and **PREVENTED FROM GOING FOR THE MEDICINES FOR THE INDIVIDUAL WHO WAS ILL.** I myself knew the native who was sent, to be one of the most orderly and well-conducted men we had at the Murray; in fact he had frequently, at different times, been living with me as an attache to the police force.

In the second place, I may state, that during the time I have held office at Moorunde, I have frequently visited on the most friendly terms, and almost alone, the most distant and hostile tribes, where so short a time before even large and well-armed bodies of Europeans could not pass uninterrupted or in safety. Many of those very natives, who had been concerned in affrays or aggressions, have since travelled hundreds of miles and encountered hunger and thirst and fatigue, to visit a white man's station in peace, and on friendly terms.

Thirdly, I may observe, that ever since I went to the Murray, instead of shewing signs of enmity or hostility, the natives have acted in the most kind and considerate manner, and have upon all occasions, when I have been travelling in less known and more remote districts, willingly accompanied me as guides and interpreters, introducing me from one tribe to another, and explaining the amicable relations I wished to establish. In one case, a native, whom I met by himself, accompanied me at once, without even saying good-bye to his wife and family, who were a mile or two away, and whom, as he was going to a distance of one hundred and fifty miles and back, he was not likely to see for a great length of time. He was quite content to send a message by the first native he met, to say where he was going. In my intercourse with the Aborigines I have always noticed that they would willingly do any thing for a person whom they were attached to. I have found that an influence, amounting almost to authority, is produced by a system of kindness; and that in cases where their own feelings and wishes were in opposition to the particular object for which this influence might be exercised, that the latter would almost invariably prevail. Thus, upon one occasion in Adelaide, where a very large body of the Murray natives were collected to fight those from Encounter Bay, I was directed by the Government to use my influence to prevent the affray. Upon going to their encampment late at night, I explained the object of my visit to them, and requested them to leave town in the morning, and return to their own district, (90 miles away.) In the morning I again went to the native camp, and found them all ready, and an hour afterwards there was not one in Adelaide. Another strong instance of the power that may be acquired over the

natives occurred at Moorunde, in 1844:—Several tribes were assembled in the neighbourhood, and were, as I was told, going to fight. I walked down towards their huts to see if this was the case, but upon arriving at the native camps I found them deserted, and all the natives about a quarter of a mile away, on the opposite side of a broad deep sheet of water caused by the floods. As I reached the edge of the water I saw the opposing parties closing, and heard the cry of battle as the affray commenced; raising my voice to the utmost, I called out to them, and was heard, even above the din of combat. In a moment all was as still as the grave, a canoe was brought for me to cross, and I found the assembled tribes fully painted and armed, and anxiously waiting to know what I was going to do. It was by this time nearly dark, and although I had no fears of their renewing the fight again for the night, I knew they would do so early in the morning; I accordingly directed them to separate, and remove their encampments. One party I sent up the river, a second down it, a third remained where they were, and two others I made recross the water, and go up to encamp near my own residence. All this was accomplished solely by the influence I had acquired over them, for I was alone and unarmed among 300 natives, whose angry passions were inflamed, and who were bent upon shedding each others' blood.

By the assistance of the natives, I was enabled in December 1843, to ascend the Darling river as far as Laidley's Ponds (above 300 miles from Moorunde) when accompanied only by two other Europeans, and should have probably been enabled to reach Mount Lyell (100 miles further) but that a severe attack of illness compelled me to return. My journey up the Darling had, however, this good effect, that it opened a friendly communication with natives who had never before come in contact with the white man, except in enmity or in contest, and paved the way for a passage upon friendly terms of any expedition that might be sent by that route to explore the continent. Little did I anticipate at the time, how soon such an expedition was to be undertaken, and how strongly and how successfully the good results I so confidently hoped for were to be fully tested.

In August 1844, Captain Sturt passed up the Murray to explore the country north-west of the Darling, and whilst at Moorunde, on his route, was supplied with a Moorunde boy to accompany his party to track stock, and also with a native of the Rufus named And-buck, to go as guide and interpreter to the Darling. The latter native had accompanied me to Laidley's Ponds in December 1843, and had come down to Moorunde, according to a promise he then made me, to visit me in the winter, and go again with me up the Darling, if I wished it. At Laidley's Ponds I found the natives very friendly and well conducted, and one of them, a young man named Topar, was of such an open intelligent disposition that although my own acquaintance with him was of very short duration, I did not hesitate to recommend him strongly to my friend Captain Sturt, as likely to be a willing and useful assistant. The following report from Captain Sturt, dated from Laidley's Ponds, will best shew how far I was justified in expecting that a friendly intercourse might be maintained even with the Darling natives, and to what distance the influence of the Government station at Moorunde had extended, upon the conciliatory system that had been adopted, limited though it was by an inadequacy of funds to provide for such a more extended and liberal treatment of the Aborigines as I should wish to have adopted.

“Sir,—Feeling assured that the Governor would be anxious to hear from me as soon as possible after the receipt of my letters from Lake Victoria, I should have taken the earliest opportunity of forwarding despatches to his Excellency after I had ascertained whether the reports I had heard of the massacre of a party of overlanders at the lagoons on the Darling was founded in fact or not; but having been obliged to cross over from the ana-branch of the Darling to that river itself for water,—and its unlooked—for course having taken me greatly to the eastward, I had no opportunity by which to send to Moorunde, although I was most anxious to allay any apprehensions my former letter might have raised as to the safety of my party. I tried to induce several natives to be the bearers of my despatches, but they seemed unwilling to undertake so long a journey; the arrival, therefore, of a messenger from

Moorunde was a most welcome occurrence, as he proposes returning to that place immediately, and will be the bearer of this communication to you.

"In continuing, for his Excellency's information, the detail of the proceedings of the expedition under my orders since I last addressed you, I have the honour to state that I had advanced a considerable way up the Darling before I ascertained satisfactorily the true grounds of the report I had heard at Lake Victoria, and was enabled to dismiss all further anxiety on the subject from my mind.

"It referred to the affray which took place on the Darling, opposite to Laidley's Ponds, between Major Mitchell and the natives; and I conclude that the circumstance of our being about to proceed to the same place, recalled a transaction which had occurred eight years ago to their minds; for we can trace a connection between the story we heard at the Lake, and what we have heard upon the spot; but all the circumstances were at first told to us with such minuteness, that coupling them with the character Major Mitchell has given of the Darling natives, and the generally received opinion of their ferocity and daring, we could hardly refuse giving a certain degree of credit to what we heard; more especially as it was once or twice confirmed by natives with whom we communicated on our way up the river. I really feared we should come into collision with these people, despite my reluctance to proceed to extremities; but it will be satisfactory to his Excellency, as I trust it will to Lord Stanley, to know that we have passed up the Darling on the most friendly terms with the native tribes, insomuch that I may venture to hope that our intercourse with them will be productive of much good. So far from the show of any hostility, they may have invariably approached us unarmed, nor have we seen a weapon in the hands of a native since we touched upon the river.

THEY HAVE CONSTANTLY SLEPT AT OUR FIRES, AND SHEWN BY THEIR MANNER THAT THEY HAD EVERY CONFIDENCE IN US, BRINGING THEIR WIVES AND CHILDREN TO THE CAMP, NOR AT ANY TIME GIVING US THE LEAST ANNOYANCE, BUT ALWAYS SHEWING A WILLINGNESS TO SAVE US TROUBLE, AND TO DO WHATEVER WE DESIRED THEM TO DO. NOTHING INDEED COULD HAVE BEEN MORE SATISFACTORY TO US THAN OUR INTERCOURSE WITH THESE POOR PEOPLE, OR MORE AMUSING THAN THE SPIRITS AND FEELINGS TO WHICH THEY HAVE GIVEN WAY BEFORE US, WHEN UNCONTROLLED BY FEAR. MANY INDEED HAVE CONTINUED WITH US FOR SOME TIME, AND HAVE EVINCED SINCERE AND MARKED SORROW AT LEAVING US.

I have made it a rule to give blankets to the old and infirm, and tomahawks and knives to the young men, and they perfectly understand the reason of this distinction. Finding too, that they consider kangaroos as their own property, we have almost invariably given them all the animals the dogs have killed, and have endeavoured to convince them that we wish to be just, and have the kindest feelings toward them. In this humane duty I have been most cordially assisted both by Mr. Poole and Mr. Browne, and I must add, by the conduct of my men towards the natives, which reflects very great credit upon them. WE HAVE RECEIVED VERY GREAT ASSISTANCE FROM OUR GUIDES, WHO HAVE ALWAYS SMOOTHED THE WAY TO OUR COMMUNICATION WITH THE DIFFERENT TRIBES; and I have earnestly to recommend Nadbuck, who has accompanied us from Moorunde to this place, to the favour of the Governor, and to request that he may be rewarded in such manner as his Excellency thinks fit, from the funds of the expedition. We find that Mr. Eyre's influence has extended to this place, and that he is considered in the highest light by all the natives along the Darling. In their physical condition they are inferior to the natives of the Murray in size and strength, but we have seen many very handsome men, and, although diminutive in stature, exceedingly well proportioned. The tribe at Williorara, Laidley's Ponds, numbers about eighty souls; the greater proportion women and children. One of them, Topar, accompanies us to the hills with another native, Toonda, who has been with us since we left

Lake Victoria, and who is a native of this tribe. He is a very singular and remarkable man, and is rather aged, but still sinewy and active; Topar is young, and handsome, active, intelligent, and exceedingly good natured;—with them I hope we shall be able to keep up our friendly relations with the natives of the interior.

“I have to request that you will thank his Excellency for the prompt assistance he would have afforded us; but I am sure it will be as gratifying to him as it is to us to know that it is not required.

“As I reported to you in my letter of the 17th of September, I left Lake Victoria on the following day, and crossing the country in a south-easterly direction, reached the Murray after a journey of about fifteen miles, over plains, and encamped on a peninsula formed by the river and a lagoon, and on which there was abundance of feed. We had observed numerous tracks of wild cattle leading from the brush across the plains to the river, and at night our camp was surrounded by them. I hoped, therefore, that if I sent out a party in the morning. I should secure two or three working bullocks, and I accordingly detached Mr. Poole and Mr. Browne, with Flood, my stockman, and Mack, to run them in; but the brush was too thick, and in galloping after a fine bull, Flood’s carbine went off, and carried away and broke three of the fingers of his right hand. This unfortunate accident obliged me to remain stationary for a day; but we reached the junction of the ana-branch of the Darling with the Murray, on the 23rd, and then turned for the first time to the northward.

“We found the ana-branch filled by the back waters of the Murray, and ran up it for two days, when the water in it ceased, and we were obliged to cross over to the Darling, which we struck on an east course, about eighteen miles above its junction with the Murray. It had scarcely any water in its bed, and no perceptible current—but its neighbourhood was green and grassy, and its whole aspect pleasing. On the 27th, we thought we perceived a stronger current in the river, and observed small sticks and grass floating on the water, and we were consequently led to believe that there was a fresh in it; and as we had had rain, and saw that the clouds hung on the mountains behind us, we were in hopes the supply the river was receiving came from Laidley’s Ponds. On the following morning the waters of the Darling were half-bank high, and from an insignificant stream it was at once converted into a broad and noble river, sweeping everything away on its turbid waters at the rate of these or four miles an hour. The river still continues to rise, and is fast filling the creeks and lagoons on either side of it. The cattle enjoy the most luxuriant feed on the banks of the river—there being abundance of grass also in the flats, which far surpass those of the Murray both in richness of soil, and in extent. I cannot but consider the river as a most valuable feature of the interior: many a rich and valuable farm might be established upon it. Its seasons appear to be particularly favourable, for we have had gentle rains ever since we came upon it. Its periodical flooding is also at a most favourable period of the year, and its waters are so muddy that the deposit must be rich, and would facilitate the growth of many of the inter-tropical productions, as cotton, indigo—the native indigo growing to the height of three feet—maize, or flax; whilst, if an available country is found in the interior, the Darling must be the great channel of communication to it. The country behind the flats is sandy and barren, but it would in many places support a certain number of stock, and might be found to be of more value than appearances would justify me in stating, and I would beg to be understood, in speaking of the Darling, that I only speak of it as I have seen it.

The summer sun probably parches up the vegetation and unclothes the soil; but such is the effect of summer heat in all similar latitudes, and that spot should be considered the most valuable where the effect of solar heat can be best counteracted by natural or artificial means. I had hoped, as I have stated, that the Darling was receiving its accession of waters from the Williorara (Laidley’s Ponds); but on arriving on its banks we were sadly disappointed to find, instead of a mountain stream, a creek only connects the river with Cowandillah Lake; instead of supplying the Darling with water it was robbing it, and there was scarcely a blade of

vegetation on its banks. I was, therefore, obliged to return to the Darling, and to encamp until such time as I should determine on our next movement. From some hills above the camp, we had a view of some ranges to the north-west and north, and I detached Mr. Poole on the 4th to ascertain the nature of the country between us and them, before I ventured to remove the party; more especially as the natives told us the interior beyond the ranges was perfectly impracticable. This morning Mr. Poole returned, and informed me that, from the top of the ranges he ascended, he had a view of distant ranges to the north and north-west, as far as he could see; that from south-west to west to 13 degrees east of north, there was water extending, amidst which there were numerous islands; that there was a very distant high peak, which appeared to be surrounded by water, which shewed as a dark blue line along the horizon. The country between him and the more distant ranges appeared to be level, and was similar in aspect to the plains we had traversed when approaching the hills, which were covered with spear grass, a grass of which the animals are fond, and thin green shrubs.

“I will not venture a conjecture as to the nature of the country whose features have been thus partially developed to us. How far these waters may stretch, and what the character of the ranges is, it is impossible to say, but that there is a good country at no great distance, I have every reason to hope. Mr. Poole states that the small scolloped parroquets passed over his head from the north-west in thousands; and he observed many new birds. I am therefore led to hope, that, as these first are evidently strong on the wing on their arrival here, that the lands from which they come are not very remote from us. So soon as I shall have verified my position in a satisfactory manner,—which a clouded sky has hitherto prevented my doing,—we shall move to the ranges, and leaving my drays in a safe place, shall proceed with the horse teams to a closer examination of the country, and, if I should find an open sea to north-west, shall embark upon it with an ample supply of provisions and water, and coast it round. The reports of the fine interior, which we have heard from the natives, are so contradictory, that it is impossible to place any reliance in them; but Toonda informs us that the water Mr. Poole has seen is fresh—but as we are not more than two hundred and fifteen feet above the sea, and are so near Lake Torrens, I can hardly believe that such can be the case. It is a problem, however, that will now very soon be solved, and I most sincerely trust this decided change in the barrenness of the land will lead us to a rich and available country.

“I have great pleasure in reporting to you the continued zeal and anxiety of my officers, and the cheerful assistance they render me. I have found Mr. Piesse of great value, from his regular and cautious issue of the stores and provisions; and Mr. Stewart extremely useful as draftsman. Amongst my men, I have to particularise Robert Flood, my stockman, whose attention to the horses and cattle has mainly insured their fitness for service and good condition; and I have every reason to feel satisfied with the manner in which the men generally perform their duties.

“I have to apologize for the hurried manner in which this letter is written, and beg to subscribe myself,

“Sir, your most obedient servant,
“CHARLES STURT.”

With reference to the above report, I may mention in explanation, that, after I had accompanied the exploring party as far as the Rufus, and returned from thence to Moorunde, a rumour was brought to Captain Sturt by some natives from the Darling, of a massacre said to have taken place up that river near Laidley’s Ponds. From being quite unacquainted with the language not only of the Darling natives, but also of the Rufus interpreter or the Moorunde boy, Captain Sturt’s party had been only able to make out the story that was told to them by signs or by the aid of such few words of English as the boy might have learnt at Moorunde. They had naturally fallen into some error, and had imagined the natives to be describing the recent murder of a European party coming down the Darling with stock, instead of their narrating, as was in reality the case, an old story of the affray with Major Mitchell some years

before. As Captain Sturt was still at the Rufus (150 miles from Moorunde) when he received the account, as he imagined, of so sanguinary an affray, he felt anxious to communicate the occurrence to the Colonial Government as early as possible, and for this purpose, induced two natives to bring down despatches to Moorunde. Upon their arrival there, the policeman was absent in town, and I had no means of sending in the letters to the Government, but by natives. Two undertook the task, and walked from Moorunde to Adelaide with the letters, and brought answers back again to the station within five days, having walked 170 miles in that period, Moorunde being 85 miles from Adelaide.

Again upon the Government wishing to communicate with Captain Sturt, letters were taken by the natives up to the Rufus, delivered over to other natives there, and by them carried onwards to Captain Sturt, reaching that gentleman on the eleventh day after they been sent from Moorunde, at Laidley's Ponds, a distance of 300 miles.

By this means a regular intercourse was kept up with the exploring party, entirely through the aid and good feeling of the natives, up to the time I left the colony, in December, 1844, when messengers who had been sent up with despatches were daily expected back with answers. For their very laborious and harassing journeys, during which they must suffer both some degree of risk in passing through so many other tribes on their line of route, and of hunger and other privations in prosecuting them, the messengers are but ill requited; the good feeling they displayed, or the fatigues they went through, being recompensed only by the present of a **SMALL BLANKET AND A FEW POUNDS OF FLOUR**. With these facts before us can we say that these natives are a ferocious, irreclaimable set of savages, and destitute of all the better attributes of humanity? yet are they often so maligned. The very natives, who have now acted in such a friendly manner, and rendered such important services to Europeans, are the **SAME NATIVES** who were engaged in the plundering of their property, and taking away their lives when coming over land with stock. Such is the change which has been effected by kindness and conciliation instead of aggression and injury; and such, I think, I may in fairness argue, would generally be the result if **SIMILAR MEANS** were more frequently resorted to.

As yet Moorunde is the only place where the experiment has been made of assembling the natives and giving food to them; but as far as it has been tried, it has been proved to be eminently successful. I am aware that the system is highly disapproved of by many of the colonists, and the general feeling among them appears to be that nothing should be given where nothing is received, or in other words, that a native should never have any thing given to him until he does some work for it. I still maintain that the native has a right to expect, and that we are **IN JUSTICE BOUND** to supply him with food in any of those parts of the country that we occupy, and to do this, too, **WITHOUT** demanding or requiring any other consideration from him than we have **ALREADY** received when we **TOOK FROM HIM** his possessions and his hunting grounds. It may be all very proper to get him to work a little if we can—and, perhaps, that **MIGHT** follow in time, but we have no right to force him to a labour he is unused to, and **WHICH HE NEVER HAD TO PERFORM IN HIS NATURAL STATE**, whilst we have a right to supply him with what he has been accustomed to, **BUT OF WHICH WE HAD DEPRIVED HIM—FOOD**.

If in our relations with the Aborigines we wish to preserve a friendly and bloodless intercourse; if we wish to have their children at our schools to be taught and educated; if we hope to bring the parents into a state that will better adapt them for the reception of christianity and civilization; or if we care about staying the rapid and lamentable ravages which a contact with us is causing among their tribes, we must endeavour to do so, by removing, as far as possible, all sources of irritation, discontent, or suffering. We must adopt a system which may at once administer to their wants, and at the same time, give to us a controlling influence over them; such as may not only restrain them from doing what is wrong, but may eventually lead them to do what is right—an influence which I feel assured would be but the stronger and more lasting from its being founded upon acts of justice and

humanity. It is upon these principles that I have based the few suggestions I am going to offer for the improvement of our policy towards the natives. I know that by many they will be looked upon as chimerical or impracticable, and I fear that more will begrudge the means necessary to carry them into effect; but unless something of the kind be done—unless some great and radical change be effected, and some little compensation made for the wrongs and injuries we inflict—I feel thoroughly satisfied that all we are doing is but time and money lost, that all our efforts on behalf of the natives are but idle words—*voces et preterea nihil*—that things will still go on as they have been going on, and that ten years hence we shall have made no more progress either in civilizing or in christianizing them than we had done ten years ago, whilst every day and every hour is tending to bring about their certain and total extinction.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE ABORIGINES.

1st. It appears that the most important point, in fact almost the only essential one, in the first instance, is to gain such an influence or authority over the Aborigines as may be sufficient to enable us to induce them to adopt, or submit to any regulations that we make for their improvement, and that to effect this, the means must be suited to their circumstances and habits.

2ndly. It is desirable that the means employed should have a tendency to restrain their wandering habits, and thus gradually induce them to locate permanently in one place.

3rdly. It is important that the plan should be of such a nature as to become more binding in its influence in proportion to the length of time it is in operation.

4thly. It should hold out strong inducements to the parents, willingly to allow their children to go to, and remain at the schools.

5thly. It should be such as would operate, in some degree, in weaning the natives from towns or populous districts.

6thly. It should offer some provision for the future career of the children upon their leaving school, and its tendency should be of such a character as to diminish, as far as practicable, the attractions of a savage life.

7thly. It is highly important that the system adopted should be such as would add to the security and protection of the settlers, and thereby induce their assistance and co-operation, instead, as has too often been the case hitherto with past measures, of exciting a feeling of irritation and dislike between the two races.

I believe that all these objects might be accomplished, in a great degree, by distributing food regularly to all the natives, in their respective districts.

[Note 111: The whole of my remarks on the Aborigines having been hurriedly compiled, on board ship, during the voyage from Australia, it was not until my arrival in England that I became aware that a plan somewhat similar to this in principle, was submitted to Lord John Russell by a Mr. J. H. Wedge, and was sent out to the colony of New South Wales, to be reported upon by the authorities. I quote the following extract from Mr. La Trobe's Remarks on Mr. Wedge's letter, as shewing an opinion differing from my own (Parliamentary Papers, p. 130). "With reference to the supply of food and clothing, it has not been hitherto deemed advisable to furnish them indiscriminately to all natives visiting the homesteads. In one case, that of the Western Port District, the assistant protector has urged that this should be the case; but I have not felt myself sufficiently convinced of the policy or expediency of such measure to bring it under his Excellency's notice."]

I have previously shewn, that from the injuries the natives sustain at our hands, in a deprivation of their usual means of subsistence, and a banishment from their homes and possessions, there is at present no alternative for them but to remain the abject and degraded creatures they are, begging about from house to house, or from station to station, to procure food, insulted and despised by all, and occasionally tempted or driven to commit crimes for which a fearful penalty is enacted, if brought home to them. I have given instances of the extent to which the evils resulting from the anomalous state of our relations with them are aggravated by the kind of feeling which circumstances engender on the part of the Colonists towards them. I have pointed out the tendency of their own habits and customs, to prevent them from rising in the scale of improvement, until we can acquire an influence sufficient to counteract these practices; and I have shewn that thus situated, oppressed, helpless, and starving, we cannot expect they should make much progress in civilization, or pay great regard to our instructions, when they see that we do not practice what we recommend, and that we have one law for ourselves and another for them. The good results that have been produced when an opposite and more liberal system has been adopted (limited as that system was) has also been stated. It is only fair to assume, therefore, that these beneficial effects may be expected to accrue in an increasing ratio in proportion to our liberality and humanity.

My own conviction is, that by adopting the system I recommend, an almost unlimited influence might be acquired over the native population. I believe that the supplying them with food would gradually bring about the abandonment of their wandering habits, in proportion to the frequency of the issue, that the longer they were thus dependent upon us for their resources, the more binding our authority would be; that when they no longer required their children to assist them in the chase or in war, they would willingly allow them to remain at our schools; that by only supplying food to natives in their own districts they would, in some measure, be weaned from the towns; that by restraining the wandering habits of the parents in this way, there would be fewer charms and less temptation to the children to relapse from a comparative state of civilization into one of barbarism again; and that, by supplying the wants of the natives, and taking away all inducements to crime, a security and protection would be afforded to the settlers which do not now exist, and which, under the present system, can never be expected, until the former have almost disappeared before their oppressors.

Many subordinate arrangements would be necessary to bring the plan into complete operation, and from its general character it could not, perhaps, be carried out every where at once, but if such arrangements were made, only in a few districts every year, much would be done towards eventually accomplishing the ends desired.

At Moorunde flour was only regularly issued once in the month, but that is not often enough to attain the full advantages of the system, still less to remedy the evils the natives are subject to, or restrain their wandering propensities. Upon the Murray the natives are peculiarly situated, and have greater facilities for obtaining their natural food than in any other part of the country. They were consequently in a position more favourable for making an experiment upon, than those of the inland districts, where a native is often obliged to wander over many miles of ground for his day's subsistence, and where large tribes cannot remain long congregated at the same place. In these it would therefore be necessary to make the issues of food much more frequently, and I would proportion this frequency to the state of each district with regard to the number of Europeans, and stock in it; and the facility there might be for procuring native food. On the borders of the colony, where the natives are less hemmed in, the issue might take place once every fortnight, gradually increasing the number of the issues in approaching towards Adelaide as a centre. At the latter, and in many other of the districts where the country is thoroughly occupied by Europeans, it would be necessary, as it would only be just, to supply the natives with food daily, and I would extend this arrangement gradually to all the districts, as funds could be obtained for that purpose. It is possible that if means at the same time were afforded of teaching them industrial pursuits, a proportion of the

food required might eventually be raised by themselves, but it would not be prudent to calculate upon any such resources at first.

Having now explained what I consider the first and most important principle, to be observed in all systems devised for the amelioration of the Aborigines, viz. that of endeavouring to adapt the means employed to the acquisition of a strong controlling influence over them, and having shewn how I think this might best be obtained, I may proceed to mention a few collateral regulations, which would be very essential to the effective working of the system proposed.

First. It would be necessary for the sake of perspicuity to suppose the country divided into districts, agreeing as nearly as could be ascertained with the boundaries of the respective tribes. In these districts a section or two of land, well supplied with wood and water, should be chosen for the Aborigines; such lands, if possible, to be centrally situated with regard to the tribes intended to assemble there, but always having reference to their favourite places of resort, or to such as would afford the greatest facilities for procuring their natural food. I do not apprehend that these stations need be very numerous at first: for the whole colony of South Australia nine or ten would probably be sufficient at present; thus stations such as I have described, at Adelaide, Encounter Bay, The Coorong, Moorunde, the Hutt River, Mount Bryant, Mount Remarkable, and Port Lincoln would embrace most of the tribes of Aborigines at present in contact with the settlers; others could be added, or these altered, as might be thought desirable or convenient.

Secondly. In order to carry due weight when first established, and until the natives get well acquainted with Europeans and their customs, it would be essential that each station should be supported by two or more policemen. These might afterwards be reduced in number, or withdrawn, according to the state of the district.

[Note 112: "It is absolutely necessary, for the cause of humanity and good order, that such force should exist; for as long as distant settlers are left unprotected, and are compelled to take care of and avenge themselves, so long must great barbarities necessarily be committed, and the only way to prevent great crimes on the part of the natives, and massacres of these poor creatures, as the punishment of such crimes, is to check and punish their excesses in their infancy; it is only after becoming emboldened by frequent petty successes that they have hitherto committed those crimes, which have drawn down so fearful a vengeance upon them."—GREY, vol ii. p. 379.]

Under any circumstances a police is necessary in all the country districts, nor do I think on the whole, many more policemen would be required than there are at out-stations at present. They would only have to be quartered at the native establishments.

Thirdly. It would be absolutely requisite to have experienced and proper persons in charge of each of the locations; as far as practicable, it would undoubtedly be the most desirable to have these establishments under missionaries. In other cases they might be confided to the protectors of the Aborigines, and to the resident or police magistrates. All officers having such charge should be deemed ex-officio to be protectors, and as many should be in the commission of the peace as possible.

Many other necessary and salutary regulations, would naturally occur in so comprehensive a scheme, but as these belong more to the detail of the system, it may be desirable to allude only to a few of the most important.

It would be desirable to keep registers at all the stations, containing lists of the natives frequenting them, their names, and that of the tribe they belong to.

Natives should not be allowed to leave their own districts, to go to Adelaide, or other large towns, unless under passes from their respective protectors, and if found in Adelaide without them, should be taken up by the police and slightly punished.

[Note 113: Natives, from a distance, are in the habit of going at certain times of the year into Adelaide, and remaining three or four months at a time. They are said by Europeans to plunder stations on the line of route backwards and forwards, and to threaten, and intimidate women and children living in isolated houses near the town. There is no doubt but that they have sometimes driven away the natives properly belonging to Adelaide, and have been the means, by their presence, of a great decrease in the attendance of the children of the Adelaide tribes at the school. The protector has more than once been obliged to make official representations on this subject, and to request that measures might be taken to keep them away.]

Deaths, Births, and Marriages, should be duly registered, and a gratuity given on every such occasion, to ensure the regulation being attended to.

Rewards should be given, (as an occasional present, of a blanket for instance), to such parents as allowed their children to go to and remain at school during the year.

Rewards should be bestowed for delivering up offenders, or for rendering any other service to the Government.

Light work should be offered to such as could be induced to undertake it, and rewards, as clothing, or the like, should be paid in proportion to the value of the work done, and **BEYOND THE MERE PROVIDING THEM** with food.

Gifts might also be made to those parents, who consented to give up the performance of any of their savage or barbarous ceremonies upon their children.

Young men should be encouraged to engage themselves in the service of settlers, as shepherds or stockkeepers, and the masters should be induced to remunerate their services more adequately than they usually do.

The elder natives should be led as far as could be, to make articles of native industry for sale, as baskets, mats, weapons, implements, nets, etc., these might be sent to Adelaide and sold periodically for their benefit.

Such and many other similar regulations, would appear to be advantageous, and might be adopted or altered from time to time, as it should be deemed desirable.

Upon the subject of schools for the native children, it appears that much benefit would be derived from having them as far separated as possible from other natives, and that the following, among others, would be improvements upon the plans in present use.

1st. That the school buildings should be of such size and arrangement, as to admit of all the scholars being lodged as well as boarded, and of the boys and girls having different sleeping rooms.

2ndly. That the schools should have a sufficiency of ground properly enclosed around them, for the play-grounds, and that no other natives than the scholars should be admitted within those precincts, except in the presence of the master, when relatives come to see each other; but that on no account should any natives be permitted to encamp or sleep within the school grounds.

3rdly. That the children should not be allowed or encouraged to roam about the towns, begging, or to ramble for any purpose outside their boundaries, where they are likely to come under the influence of the other natives. This is particularly necessary with respect to girls, indeed the latter should never be allowed to be absent from school at all, by themselves.

4thly. To compensate in some degree, for what may at first appear to them an irksome or repulsive restraint, playthings should occasionally be provided for those children who have behaved well, and all innocent amusement be encouraged, and as often as might be convenient, the master should accompany his scholars out into the country for recreation, or through the town, or such other public places, as might be objects of interest or curiosity.

5thly. That a stimulus to exertion, should be excited by prizes, being given to children distinguishing themselves at certain stages of their progress, such as a superior article of dress, a toy, or book, or whatever might be best adapted to the age or disposition of the child.

6thly. That parents should never be allowed to withdraw the children, contrary to their wishes, after having once consented to allow them to remain there.

7thly. That children of both sexes, after having received a proper degree of instruction, and having attained a certain age, should be bound out as apprentices for a limited term of years, to such as were willing to receive them, proper provision being made for their being taught some useful occupation, and being well treated.

8thly. Encouragement should be offered to those who have been brought up at the schools to marry together when their apprenticeships are out, and portions of land should be preserved for them and assistance given them in establishing themselves in life. At first perhaps it might be advisable to have these settlements in the form of a village and adjoining the school grounds, so that the young people might still receive the advantage of the advice or religious instruction of the missionaries or such ministers as attended to this duty at the schools.

9thly. The children should be taught exclusively in the English language and on Sundays should always attend divine service at some place of public worship, accompanied by their masters.

In carrying into effect the above or any other regulations which might be found necessary for the welfare and improvement of the children. I believe that a sufficient degree of influence would be acquired over the parents by the system of supplying them with food, which I have recommended to induce a cheerful consent, but it would be only prudent to have a legislative enactment on the subject, that by placing the school-children under the guardianship of the protectors, they might be protected from the influence or power of their relatives; after these had once fully consented to their being sent to school to be educated.

[Note 114: “The best chance of preserving the unfortunate race of New Holland lies in the means employed for training their children: the education given to such children should consist in a very small part of reading and writing. Oral instruction in the fundamental truths of the Christian religion will be given by the missionaries themselves. The children should be taught early; the boys to dig and plough, and the trades of shoemakers, tailors, carpenters and masons; the girls to sew and cook and wash linen, and keep clean the rooms and furniture. The more promising of these children might be placed, by a law to be framed for this purpose, under the guardianship of the Governor and placed by him at a school, or in apprenticeship, in the more settled parts of the colony. Thus early trained, the capacity of the race for the duties and employments of civilized life would be fairly developed.”—Letter from Lord John Russell to Sir G. Gipps; Parliamentary Report on Aborigines, p. 74.]

There is yet another point to be considered with respect to the Aborigines, and upon the equitable adjustment of which hinges all our relations with this people, whilst upon it depends entirely our power of enforcing any laws or regulations we may make with respect to them, I allude to the law of evidence as it at present stands with respect to persons incompetent to give testimony upon oath.

It is true that in South Australia an act has very recently passed the legislative council to legalize the unsworn testimony of natives in a court of justice, but in that act there occurs a clause which completely neutralizes the boon it was intended to grant, and which is as follows, "Provided that no person, whether an Aboriginal or other, SHALL BE CONVICTED OF ANY OFFENCE by any justice or jury upon the SOLE TESTIMONY of any such uncivilized persons." 7 and 8 Victoria, section 5.

Here then we find that if a native were ill-treated or shot by an European, and the whole tribe able to bear witness to the fact, no conviction and no punishment could ensue: let us suppose that in an attempt to maltreat the native, the European should be wounded or injured by him, and that the European has the native brought up and tried for a murderous attack upon him, how would it fare with the poor native? the oath of the white man would overpower any exculpatory unsworn testimony that the native could bring, and his conviction and punishment would be (as they have been before) certain and severe.

Without attempting to assign a degree of credence to the testimony of a native beyond what it deserves, I will leave it to those who are acquainted with Colonies, and the value of an oath among the generality of storekeepers and shepherds, to say how far their SWORN evidence is, in a moral point of view, more to be depended upon than the unsworn parole of the native. I would ask too, how often it occurs that injuries upon the Aborigines are committed by Europeans in the presence of those competent to give a CONVICTING TESTIMONY, (unless where all, being equally guilty, are for their own sakes mutually averse to let the truth be known)? or how often even such aggressions take place under circumstances which admit of circumstantial evidence being obtained to corroborate native testimony?

Neither is it in the giving of evidence alone, that the native stands at a disadvantage as compared with a white man. His case, whether as prosecutor or defendant, is tried before a jury of another nation whose interests are opposed to his, and whose prejudices are often very strong against him.

I cannot illustrate the position in which he is placed, more forcibly, than by quoting Captain Grey's remarks, vol. ii. p. 381, where he says:—

"It must also be borne in mind, that the natives are not tried by a jury of their peers, but by a jury having interests directly opposed to their own, and who can scarcely avoid being in some degree prejudiced against native offenders."

The opinion of Judge Willis upon this point may be gathered from the following extract, from an address to a native of New South Wales, when passing sentence of death upon him:—

"The principle upon which this court has acted in the embarrassing collisions which have too frequently arisen between the Aborigines and the white Europeans, has been one of reciprocity and mutual protection. On the one hand, the white man when detected (WHICH I FEAR SELDOM HAPPENS), has been justly visited with the rigour of the law, for aggressions on the helpless savages; and, on the other, the latter has been accountable for outrages upon his white brethren. As between the Aborigines themselves, the court has never interfered, for obvious reasons. Doubtless, in applying the law of a civilized nation to the condition of a wild savage, innumerable difficulties must occur. The distance in the scale of humanity between the wandering, houseless man of the woods, and the civilized European, is

immeasurable! FOR PROTECTION, AND FOR RESPONSIBILITY IN HIS RELATION TO THE WHITE MAN THE BLACK IS REGARDED AS A BRITISH SUBJECT. In theory, this sounds just and reasonable; but in practice, how incongruous becomes its application! As a British subject, he is presumed to know the laws, for the infraction of which he is held accountable, and yet he is shut out from the advantage of its protection when brought to the test of responsibility. As a British subject, he is entitled to be tried by his PEERS. Who are the peers of the black man? Are those, of whose laws, customs, language, and religion, he is wholly ignorant—nay, whose very complexion is at variance with his own—HIS peers? He is tried in his native land by a race new to him, and by laws of which he knows nothing. Had you, unhappy man! had the good fortune to be born a Frenchman, or had been a native of any other country but your own, the law of England would have allowed you to demand a trial by half foreigners and half Englishmen. But, by your lot being the lowest, as is assumed, in the scale of humanity, you are inevitably placed on a footing of fearful odds, when brought into the sacred temple of British justice. Without a jury of your own countrymen—without the power of making adequate defence, by speech or witness—you are to stand the pressure of every thing that can be alleged against you, and your only chance of escape is, not the strength of your own, but the weakness of your adversary's case. Surrounded as your trial was with difficulties, everything, I believe, was done that could be done to place your case in a proper light before the jury. They have come to a conclusion satisfactory, no doubt, to their consciences. Whatever might be the disadvantages under which you laboured, they were convinced, as I am, that you destroyed the life of Dillon; and as there was nothing proved to rebut the presumption, of English law, arising from the fact of homicide being committed by you, they were constrained to find you guilty of murder. There may have been circumstances, if they could have been proved, which would have given a different complexion to the case from that of the dying declaration of the deceased, communicated to the Court through the frail memory of two witnesses, who varied in their relation of his account of the transaction. This declaration, so taken, was to be regarded as if taken on oath, face to face with your accuser; and, although you had not the opportunity of being present at it, and of cross-examining the dying man, yet by law it was receivable against you."

In vol. ii. p 380, Captain Grey says:—

"I have been a personal witness to a case in which a native was most undeservedly punished, from the circumstance of the natives, who were the only persons who could speak as to certain exculpatory facts, not being permitted to give their evidence."

Under the law lately passed in South Australia, the evidence of natives would be receivable in a case of this kind, in palliation of the offence. Although it is more than questionable how far such evidence would weigh against the white man's oath; but for the purpose of obtaining redress for a wrong, or of punishing the cruelty, or the atrocity of the European [Note 115 at end of para.], no amount of native evidence would be of the least avail. Reverse the case, and the sole unsupported testimony of a single witness, will be quite sufficient to convict even unto death, as has lately been the case in two instances connected with Port Lincoln, where the natives have been tried at different times for murder, convicted, and two of them hung, upon the testimony of one old man, who was the only survivor left among the Europeans, but who, from the natural state of alarm and confusion in which he must have been upon being attacked, and from the severe wounds he received, could not have been in an advantageous position, for observing, or remarking the identity of the actual murderers, among natives, who, even under more favourable circumstances are not easily recognizable upon a hasty view, and still less so, if either they, or the observer, are in a state of excitement at the time. Is it possible for the natives to be blind to the unequal measure of justice, which is thus dealt out, and which will still continue to be so as long as the law remains unchanged?

[Note 115: Governor Hutt remarks, in addressing Lord Glenelg on this subject:—"In furtherance of the truth of these remarks, I would request your Lordship particularly to

observe, that here is one class of Her Majesty's subjects, who are DEBARRED A TRUE AND FAIR TRIAL BY JURY, whose evidence is inadmissible in a court of justice, and who consequently may be the victims of any of the most outrageous cruelty and violence, and yet be UNABLE, FROM THE FORMS AND REQUIREMENTS OF THE LAW, to obtain redress, and whose quarrels, ending sometimes in bloodshed and death, it is unjust, as well as inexpedient, to interfere with.

“A jury ought to be composed of a man's own peers. Europeans, in the case of a native criminal, cannot either in their habits or sympathies be regarded as such, and his countrymen are incapable of understanding or taking upon themselves the office of juror.”]

I have no wish to give the native evidence a higher character than it deserves, but I think that it ought not to be rendered unavailable in a prosecution; the degree of weight or credibility to be attached to it, might be left to the court taking cognizance of the case, but if it is consistent and probable, I see no reason why it should not be as strong a safeguard to the black man from injury and oppression, as the white man's oath is to him. There are many occasions on which the testimony of natives may be implicitly believed, and which are readily distinguishable by those who have had much intercourse with this people—unaccustomed to the intricacies of untruth, they know not that they must be consistent to deceive, and it is therefore rarely difficult to tell when a native is prevaricating.

Among the natives themselves, the evil effects resulting from the inability of their evidence to produce a conviction are still more apparent and injurious. [Note 116 at end of para.] It has already been shewn how highly important it is to prevent the elders from exercising an arbitrary and cruel authority over the young and the weak, and how necessary that the latter should feel themselves quite secure from the vengeance of the former, when endeavouring to throw off the trammels of custom and prejudice, and by embracing our habits and pursuits, making an effort to rise in the scale of moral and physical improvement. Whatever alteration therefore we may make in our system for the better, or however anxious we may be for the welfare and the improvement of the Aborigines, we may rest well assured that our efforts are but thrown away, as long as the natives are permitted with impunity to exercise their cruel or degrading customs upon each other, unchecked and unpunished. We may feel equally certain that these oppressions and barbarities can never be checked or punished but by means of their own unsupported testimony against each other, and until this can be legally received, and made available for that purpose, there is no hope of any lasting or permanent good being accomplished.

[Note 116: Upon the inability of natives to give evidence in a court of justice, Mr. Chief Protector Robinson remarks, in a letter to His Honour, the Superintendent of Port Phillip, dated May, 1843—”The legal disabilities of the natives have been a serious obstacle to their civil protection; and I feel it my duty, whilst on this subject, respectfully to bring under notice the necessity that still exists for some suitable system of judicature for the governance and better protection of the aboriginal races. ‘As far as personal influence went, the aboriginal natives have been protected from acts of injustice, cruelty, and oppression; and their wants, wishes, and grievances have been faithfully represented to the Government of the colony,’ and this, under the circumstances, was all that could possibly be effected. There is, however, reason to fear that the destruction of the aboriginal natives has been accelerated from the known fact of their being incapacitated to give evidence in our courts of law. I have frequently had to deplore, when applied to by the Aborigines for justice in cases of aggression committed on them by white men, or by those of their own race, my inability to do so in consequence of their legal incapacity to give evidence. It were unreasonable, therefore, under such circumstances, to expect the Aborigines would respect, or repose trust and confidence in the Protectors, or submit to the governance of a department unable efficiently to protect or afford them justice. Nor is it surprising they should complain of being made to suffer the higher penalties of our law, when deprived (by legal disability) of its benefits. Little difficulty

has been experienced in discovering the perpetrator where the blacks have been concerned, even in the greater offences, and hence the ends of justice would have been greatly facilitated by aboriginal evidence. It is much to be regretted the Colonial Act of Council on aboriginal evidence was disallowed.”]

The following very forcible and just remarks are from Captain Grey’s work, vol. ii. pages 375 to 378:—

“I would submit, therefore, that it is necessary from the moment the Aborigines of this country are declared British subjects, they should, as far as possible, be taught that the British laws are to supersede their own, so that any native who is suffering under their own customs, may have the power of an appeal to those of Great Britain; or to put this in its true light, that all authorized persons should, in all instances, be required to protect a native from the violence of his fellows, even though they be in the execution of their own laws.

“So long as this is not the case, the older natives have at their disposal the means of effectually preventing the civilization of any individuals of their own tribe, and those among them who may be inclined to adapt themselves to the European habits and mode of life, will be deterred from so doing by their fear of the consequences, that the displeasure of others may draw down upon them.

“So much importance am I disposed to attach to this point, that I do not hesitate to assert my full conviction, that whilst those tribes which are in communication with Europeans are allowed to execute their barbarous laws and customs upon one another, so long will they remain hopelessly immersed in their present state of barbarism: and however unjust such a proceeding might at first sight appear, I believe that the course pointed out by true humanity would be, to make them from the very commencement amenable to the British laws, both as regards themselves and Europeans; for I hold it to be imagining a contradiction to suppose, that individuals subject to savage and barbarous laws, can rise into a state of civilization, which those laws have a manifest tendency to destroy and overturn.

“I have known many instances of natives who have been almost or quite civilized, being compelled by other natives to return to the bush; more particularly girls, who have been betrothed in their infancy, and who, on approaching the years of puberty, have been compelled by their husbands to join them.

“To punish the Aborigines severely for the violation of laws of which they are ignorant, would be manifestly cruel and unjust; but to punish them in the first instance slightly for the violation of these laws would inflict no great injury on them, whilst by always punishing them when guilty of a crime, without reference to the length of period that had elapsed between its perpetration and their apprehension, at the same time fully explaining to them the measure of punishment that would await them in the event of a second commission of the same fault, would teach them gradually the laws to which they were henceforth to be amenable, and would shew them that crime was always eventually, although it might be remotely, followed by punishment.

“I imagine that this course would be more merciful than that at present adopted; viz. to punish them for a violation of a law they are ignorant of, when this violation affects a European, and yet to allow them to commit this crime as often as they like, when it only regards themselves; for this latter course teaches them, not that certain actions, such, for instance, as murder, etc. are generally criminal, but only that they are criminal when exercised towards the white people, and the impression, consequently excited in their minds is, that these acts only excite our detestation when exercised towards ourselves, and that their criminality consists, not in having committed a certain odious action, but in having violated our prejudices.”

Many instances have come under my own personal observation, where natives have sought redress both against one another and against Europeans, but where from their evidence being unavailable no redress could be afforded them. Enough has however been now adduced to shew the very serious evils resulting from this disadvantage, and to point out the justice, the policy, the practicability, and the necessity of remedying it.

In bringing to a close my remarks on the Aborigines, their present condition and future prospects, I cannot more appropriately or more forcibly conclude the subject than by quoting that admirable letter of Lord Stanley's to Governor Sir G. Gipps, written in December, 1842; a letter of which the sentiments expressed are as creditable to the judgment and discrimination, as they are honourable to the feelings and humanity of the minister who wrote it, and who, in the absence of personal experience, and amidst all the conflicting testimony or misrepresentation by which a person at a distance is ever apt to be assailed and misled, has still been able to separate the truth from falsehood, and to arrive at a rational, a christian, and a just opinion, on a subject so fraught with difficulties, so involved in uncertainty, and so beset with discrepancies.

In writing to Sir G. Gipps, Lord Stanley says (Parliamentary Reports, pp. 221, 2, 3):—

“DOWNING-STREET, 20TH DECEMBER, 1842. “SIR,

“I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your despatches of the dates and numbers mentioned in the margin, reporting the information which has reached you in respect to the aboriginal tribes of New South Wales, and the result of the attempts which have been made, under the sanction of Her Majesty's Government, to civilize and protect these people.

“I have read with great attention, but with deep regret, the accounts contained in these despatches. After making every fair allowance for the peculiar difficulty of such an undertaking, it seems impossible any longer to deny that the efforts which have hitherto been made for the civilization of the Aborigines have been unavailing; that no real progress has yet been effected, and that there is no reasonable ground to expect from them greater success in future. You will be sensible with how much pain and reluctance I have come to this opinion, but I cannot shut my eyes to the conclusion which inevitably follows from the statements which you have submitted to me on the subject.

“Your despatch of the 11th March last, No. 50, contains an account of the several missions up to that date, with reports likewise from the chief Protector and his assistants, and from the Crown Land Commissioners. The statements respecting the missions, furnished not by their opponents, nor even by indifferent parties, but by the missionaries themselves, are, I am sorry to say, as discouraging as it is possible to be. In respect to the mission at Wellington Valley, Mr. Gunther writes in a tone of despondency, which shews that he has abandoned the hope of success. The opening of his report is indeed a plain admission of despair; I sincerely wish that his facts did not bear out such a feeling. But when he reports, that after a trial of ten years, only one of all who have been attached to the mission ‘affords some satisfaction and encouragement;’ that of the others only four still remain with them, and that these continually absent themselves, and when at home evince but little desire for instruction; that ‘their thoughtlessness, and spirit of independence, ingratitude, and want of sincere, straightforward dealing, often try us in the extreme;’ that drunkenness is increasing, and that the natives are ‘gradually swept away by debauchery and other evils arising from their intermixture with Europeans,’ I acknowledge that he has stated enough to warrant his despondency, and to shew that it proceeds from no momentary disappointment alone, but from a settled and reasonable conviction.

“Nor do the other missions hold out any greater encouragement. That at Moreton Bay is admitted by Mr. Handt to have made but little progress, as neither children nor adults can be

persuaded to stay for any length of time; while that at Lake Macquarie had, at the date of your despatch, ceased to exist, from the extinction or removal of the natives formerly in its vicinity. The Wesleyan Missionaries at Port Phillip, notwithstanding an expenditure in 1841 of nearly 1,300 pounds, acknowledge that they are 'far from being satisfied with the degree of success which has attended our labours,' and 'that a feeling of despair sometimes takes possession of our minds, and weighs down our spirits,' arising from the frightful mortality among the natives.

"In the face of such representations, which can be attributed neither to prejudice nor misinformation, I have great doubts as to the wisdom or propriety of continuing the missions any longer. I fear that to do so would be to delude ourselves with the mere idea of doing something; which would be injurious to the natives, as interfering with other and more advantageous arrangements, and unjust to the colony, as continuing an unnecessary and profitless expenditure.

"To this conclusion I had been led by your despatch, No. 50, but anticipating that the protectorate system would promise more beneficial results, I postponed my instructions in the matter until I should receive some further information.

"Your despatches of the 16th and 20th May have furnished that further information, although they contradict the hopes which I had been led to entertain. After the distinct and unequivocal opinion announced by Mr. La Trobe, supported as it is by the expression of your concurrence, I cannot conceal from myself that the failure of the system of protectors has been at least as complete as that of the missions.

"I have no doubt that a portion of this ill success, perhaps a large portion, is attributable to the want of sound judgment and zealous activity on the part of the assistant protectors. Thus the practice of collecting large bodies of the natives in one spot, and in the immediate vicinity of the settlers, without any previous provision for their subsistence or employment, was a proceeding of singular indiscretion. That these people would commit depredations rather than suffer want, and that thus ill-blood, and probably collisions, would be caused between them and the settlers, must, I should have thought, have occurred to any man of common observation; and no one could have better reason than Mr. Sievewright to know his utter inability to control them. When such a course could be adopted, I am not surprised at your opinion that the measures of the protectors have tended 'rather to increase than allay the irritation which has long existed between the two races.'

"But after allowing for the effect of such errors, and for the possibility of preventing their recurrence, there is yet enough in Mr. La Trobe's reports to shew that the system itself is defective, at least in the hands of those whose services we are able to command. I am unwilling, at this distance from the scene, and without that minute local knowledge which is essential, to give you any precise instructions as to the course which under present circumstances should be pursued: but I have the less hesitation in leaving the matter in your hands, because your whole correspondence shews that no one feels more strongly than yourself the duty as well as the policy of protecting, and, if possible, civilizing these Aborigines, and of promoting a good understanding between them and the white settlers. At present, though I am far from attributing to the white settlers generally an ill disposition towards the natives, there is an apparent want of feeling among them, where the natives are concerned, which is much to be lamented. Outrages of the most atrocious description, involving sometimes considerable loss of life, are spoken of, as I observe in these papers, with an indifference and lightness which to those at a distance is very shocking. I cannot but fear that the feeling which dictates this mode of speaking, may also cause the difficulty in discovering and bringing to justice the perpetrators of the outrages which from time to time occur. With a view to the protection of the natives, the most essential step is to correct the temper and tone adopted towards them by the settlers. Whatever may depend on your own

personal influence, or on the zealous co-operation of Mr. La Trobe, will I am sure be done at once, and I will not doubt that your efforts in this respect will be successful. In regard to the missions and the protectors, I give you no definite instructions. If at your receipt of this despatch you should see no greater prospect of advantage than has hitherto appeared, you will be at liberty to discontinue the grants to either as early as possible; but if circumstances should promise more success for the future, the grants may be continued for such time as may be necessary to bring the matter to a certain result. In the meantime, agreeing as I do, in the general opinion, that it is indispensable to the protection of the natives that their evidence should, to a certain extent at least, be received in the courts of law, I shall take into my consideration the means by which this can be effected in the safest and most satisfactory manner.

"I cannot conclude this despatch without expressing my sense of the importance of the subject of it, and my hope that your experience may enable you to suggest some general plan by which we may acquit ourselves of the obligations which we owe towards this helpless race of beings. I should not, without the most extreme reluctance, admit that nothing can be done; that with respect to them alone the doctrines of Christianity must be inoperative, and the advantages of civilization incommunicable. I cannot acquiesce in the theory that they are incapable of improvement, and that their extinction before the advance of the white settler is a necessity which it is impossible to control. I recommend them to your protection and favourable consideration with the greatest earnestness, but at the same time with perfect confidence: and I assure you that I shall be willing and anxious to co-operate with you in any arrangement for their civilization which may hold out a fair prospect of success.

"I have, etc. "(signed) "STANLEY."

EXPLANATION OF THE PLATES OF NATIVE ORNAMENTS, WEAPONS,
IMPLEMENTs, AND WORKS OF INDUSTRY.

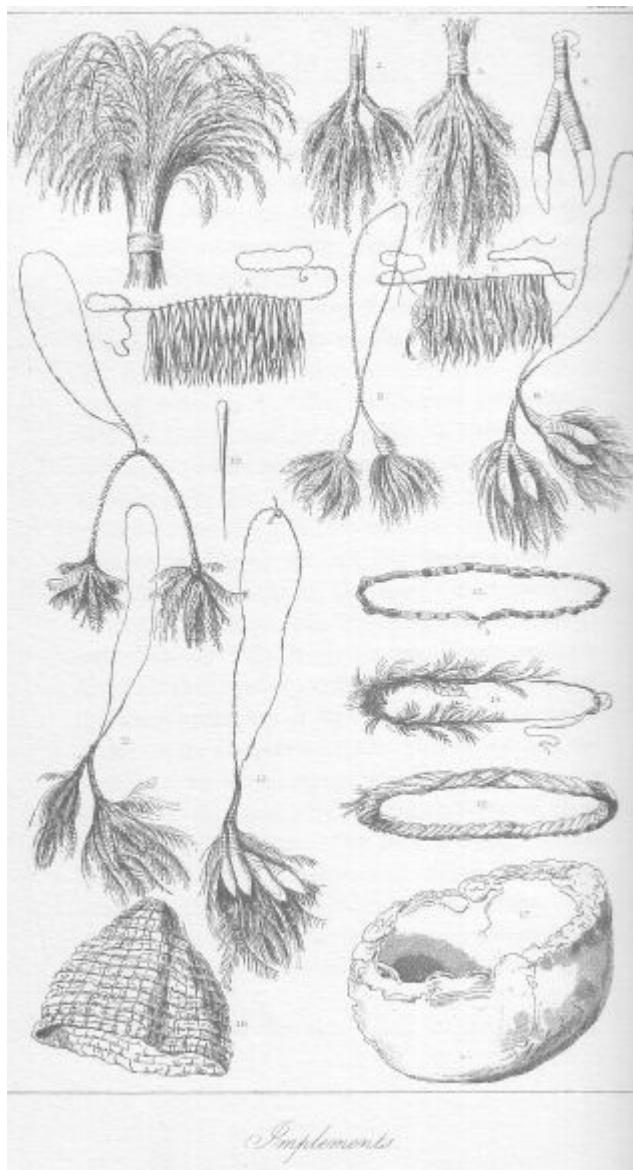


Plate I.—Native Ornaments

1. Ku-ru-un-ko—tuft of emu feathers used in the play spoken of, page 228.
2. Three tufts of feathers tied in a bunch, with two kangaroo teeth, worn tied to the hair.
3. Tufts of feathers, used as a flag or signal, elevated on a spear; similar ones are worn by the males, of eagle or emu feathers over the pubes.
4. Let-ter-rer—kangaroo teeth worn tied to the hair of young males and females after the ceremonies of initiation.
- 5 and 6. Coverings for the pubes, worn by females, one is of fur string in threads, the other of skins cut in strips.
7. Tufts of white feathers worn round the neck.

8. Tufts of feathers stained red, worn round the neck.
9. Tufts of feathers stained red, with two kangaroo teeth to each tuft, also worn round the neck.
10. A piece of bone worn through the septum nasi.
11. Tufts of feathers worn round the neck, one is black, the other stained red.
12. Tufts of feathers stained red, with four kangaroo teeth in a bunch, worn round the neck.
13. Necklace of reeds cut in short lengths.
14. Band for forehead, feathers and swan's-down.
15. Man-ga—band for forehead, a coil of string made of opossum fur.
16. Mona—net cap to confine the hair of young men of opossum fur.
17. Korno—widow's mourning cap made of carbonate of lime, moulded to the head, weight 8 1/2lbs.
18. Dog's-tail, worn as an appendage to the beard, which is gathered together and tied in a pigtail.

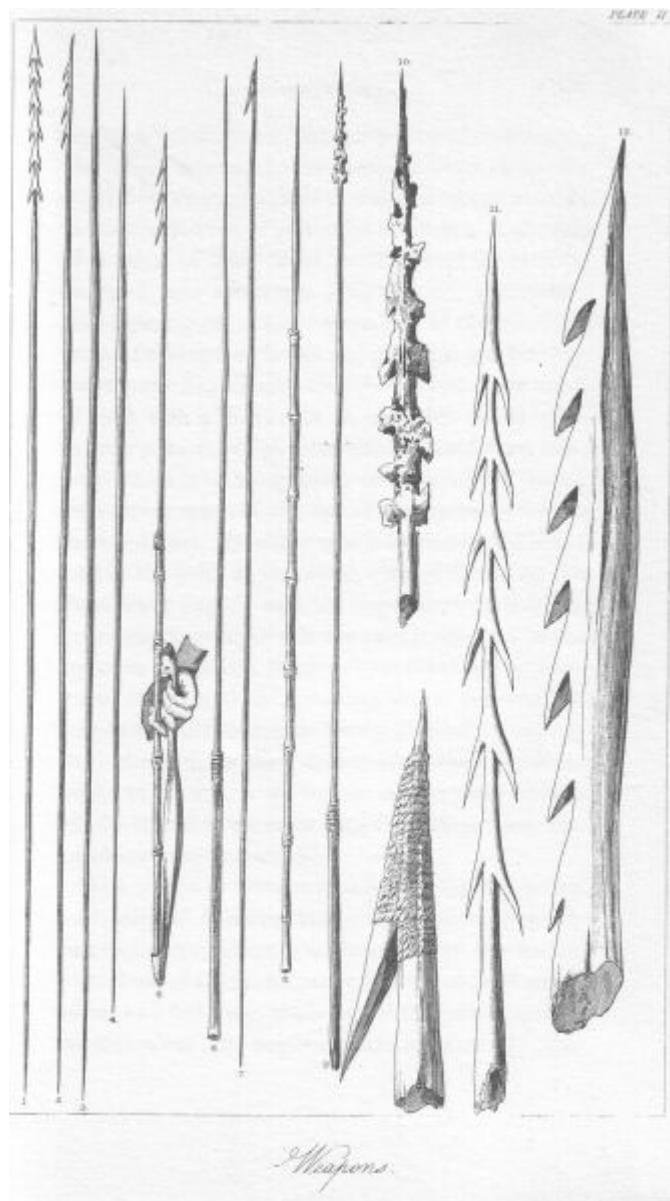


Plate II. Native Weapons

1. Spear barbed on both sides, of hard wood, 10 1/2 feet long, used in war or hunting.
2. Similar to the last but only barbed on one side, used for same purposes.
3. Kar-ku-ru—smooth spear of hard wood, 10 1/2 feet, used for punishments, as described page 222, also for general purposes.
4. Short, smooth, hard wood spear, 7 1/2 feet long, used to spear fish in diving.
5. Reed spear with barbed hard wood point, used for war with the throwing stick—the way of holding it, and position of the hand are shewn.
6. Hard wood spear with grass-tree end, 8 feet long, used with the throwing stick for general purposes.

7. Hard wood spear with single barb spliced on, 8 feet long, used from Port Lincoln to King George's Sound for chase or war, it is launched with the throwing stick.
8. Ki-ko—reed spear, hard wood point, 6 to 7 feet long, used with the throwing—stick to kill birds or other game.
9. Hard wood spear, grass—tree end, barbed with flint, used with the throwing—stick for war.
10. The head of No. 9 on a arger scale.
11. The head of No. 1 on a larger scale.
12. The head of a Lachlan spear, taken from a man who was wounded there, the spear entered behind the shoulder in the back, and the point reached to the front of the throat, it had to be extracted by cutting an opening in the throat and forcing the spear—head through from behind—the man recovered.
13. The head of No. 7 on a larger scale.

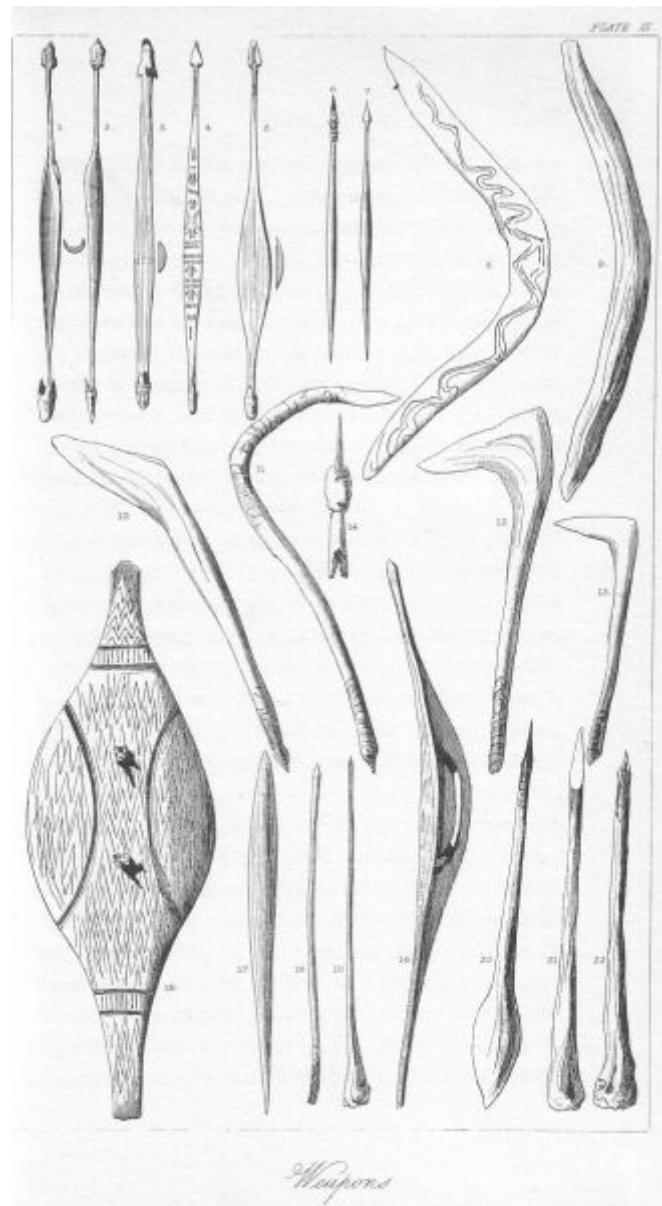


Plate III. Native Weapons

1. Nga-waonk, or throwing-stick, about 2 feet long, and narrow.
2. Ditto but hollowed and conical.
3. Ditto straight and flat.
4. Ditto narrow and carved.
5. Ditto broad in the centre.
6. Sorcerer's stick, with feathers and fur string round the point
7. Ditto plain.
8. The Darling Wangn, (boomerang) carved, 1 foot 10 inches.

9. The Darling war Wangn, 2 feet 1 inch.
10. Battle-axe.
11. Ditto
12. Ditto
13. Ditto
14. The lower end of the throwing-stick, shewing a flint gummed on as a chisel.
15. The Tar-ram, or shield made out of solid wood, 2 feet 7 inches long, 1 foot broad, carved and painted.
16. A side view of ditto
17. War-club of heavy wood, rounded and tapering.
18. Port Lincoln Wirris, or stick used for throwing at game, 2 feet.
19. Murray River Bwirri, or ditto ditto
20. War club, with a heavy knob, and pointed.
21. Port Lincoln Midla, or lever, with quartz knife attached to the end.
22. Murray river war club.

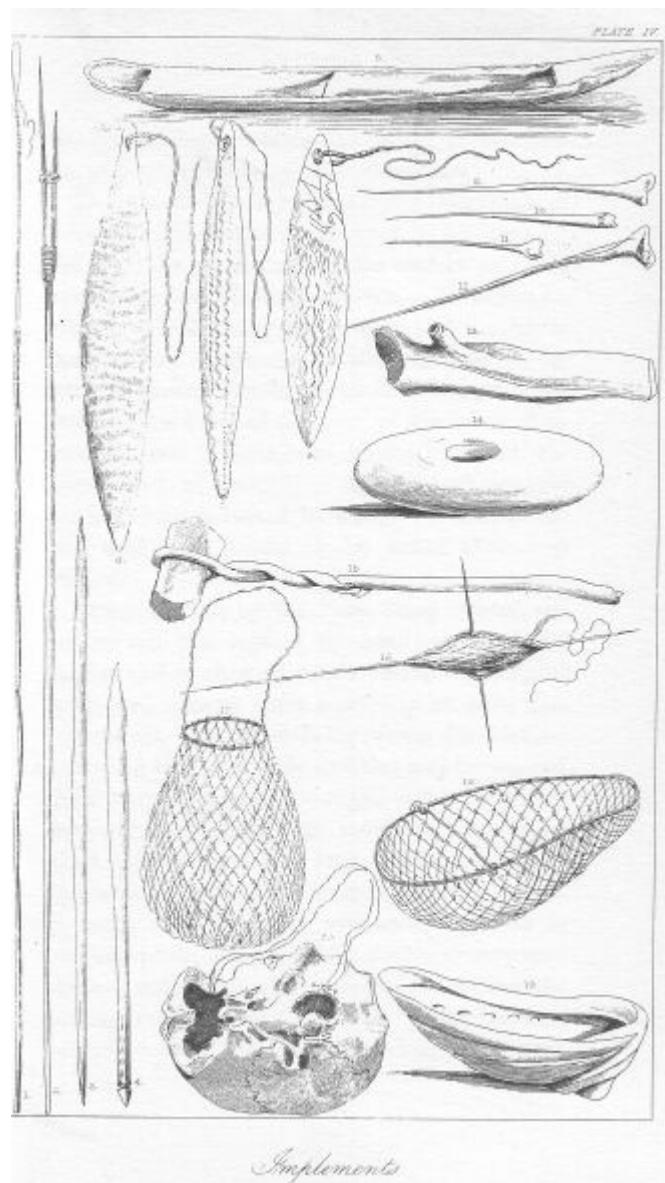


Plate IV. Native Implements

1. Tat-tat-ko, or rod for noosing wild fowl, 16 feet long, vide p. 310.
2. Moo-ar-roo, or paddle and fish spear, 10 to 16 feet, vide p. 263.
3. Chisel pointed hard wood stick, from 3 to 4 feet long, used by the women for digging.
4. Ngakko, or chisel pointed stick, 3 feet long, used by the men.
5. Mun—canoe of bark, vide p. 314.
6. 7, 8. Varieties of Mooyumkarr, or sacred oval pieces of wood, used at night, by being spun round with a long string so as to produce a loud roaring noise for the object of counteracting any evil influences, and for other purposes.
9. 10, 11, 12. Needles, etc. from the fibulas of kangaroos, wallabies, emus, etc.
13. Kangaroo bone, used as a knife.

14. Stone with hollow in centre for pounding roots.
15. Stone hatchet.
16. Distaff with string of hair upon it.
17. Lenko, or net hung round the neck in diving to put muscles, etc. in.
18. Kenderanko, net used in diving, vide p. 260.
19. Drinking cup made of a shell.
20. Drinking cup, being the scull of a native with the sutures closed with wax or gum.

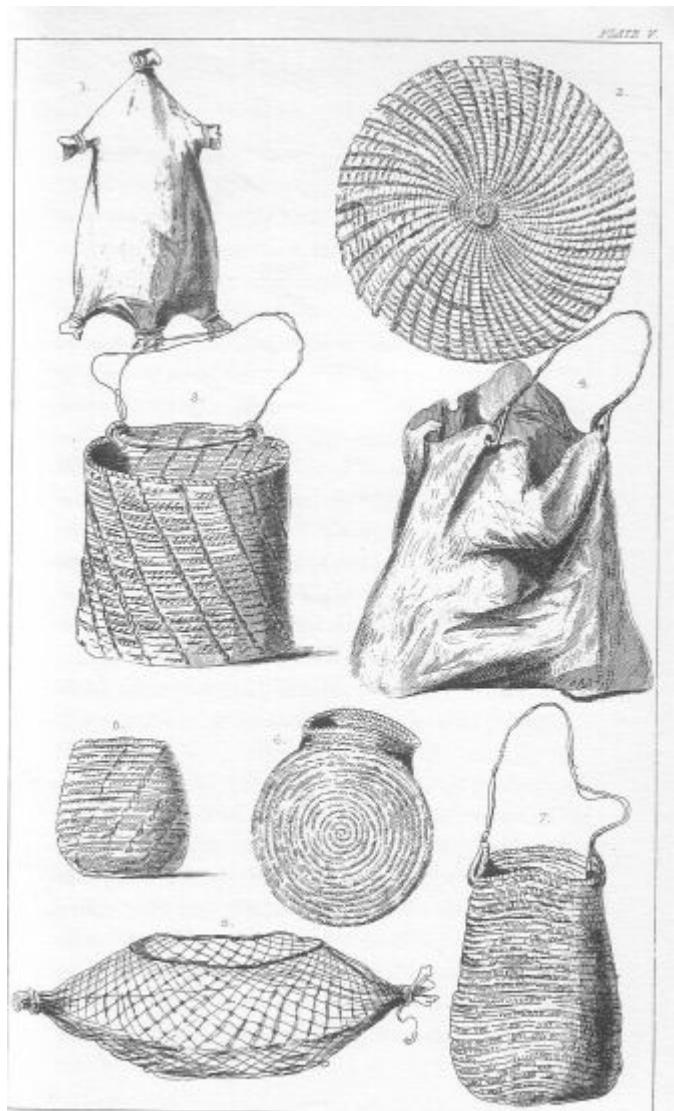


Plate V. Native Works of Industry

1. Lukomb, or skin for carrying water, made from the skins of opossums, wallabie, or young kangaroo; the fur is turned inside, and the legs, tail, and neck, are tied up; they hold from 1 quart to 3 gallons.
2. Pooneed-ke—circular mat, 1 foot 9 inches in diameter, made of a kind of grass, worn on the back by the women, with a band passed round the lower part and tied in front, the child is then slipped in between the mat and the back, and so carried.
3. Kal-la-ter—a truncated basket of about a foot wide at the bottom, made also of a broad kind of grass, used for carrying anything in, and especially for taking about the fragile eggs of the Leipoa.
4. A wallet, or man's travelling bag, made of a kangaroo skin, with the fur outside.
5. A small kal-la-ter.
6. Pool-la-da-noo-ko, or oval basket made of broad-leaved grass, used for carrying anything; from its flat make, it fits easily to the back.
7. An Adelaide oblong and somewhat flattish basket, made of a kind of rush.
8. The Rok-ko, or net bag, made of a string manufactured from the rush, it is carried by the women, and contains generally all the worldly property of the family, such as shells and pieces of flint for knives—bones for needles—sinews of animals for thread—fat and red ochre for adorning the person—spare ornaments or belts—white pigment for painting for the dance—a skin for carrying water—a stone for pounding roots—the sacred implements of the husband carefully folded up and concealed—a stone hatchet—and many other similar articles. The size of the rok-ko varies according to the wealth of the family; it is sometimes very large and weighty when filled.

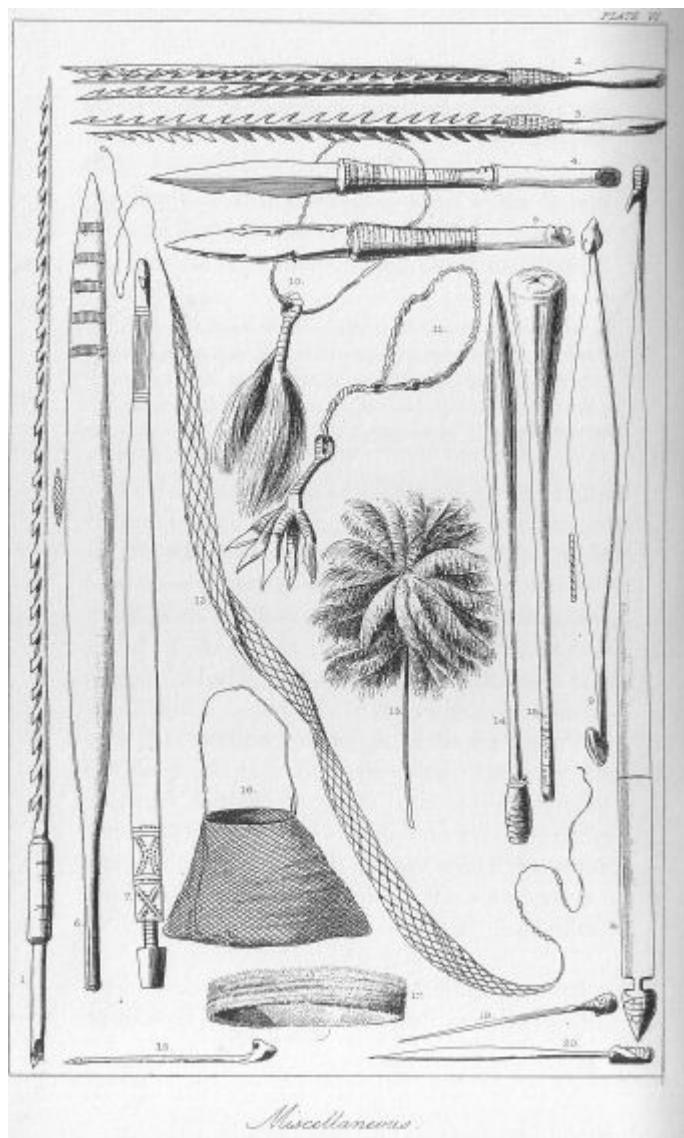


Plate VI. Miscellaneous Native Articles

1. Head of war spear of the North Coast, barbed for 3 feet, total length 9 1/2 feet.
2. Head of fish spear of the North Coast, barbed for 18 inches, total length 8 3/4 feet.
2. Head of spear of the North Coast, barbed for 18 inches, total length 8 3/4 feet.
4. Head of war spear of the North Coast, with head of quartz, 6 inches, total length 9 1/2 feet.
5. Head of war spear of the North Coast, with head of slate, 6 inches, total length 9 1/2 feet.
6. Two handed sword of hard wood, North Coast, 3 1/2 feet.
7. Throwing stick of North Coast, 3 feet 1 inch.
8. Throwing stick of North Coast, very pliant, 3-16ths of an inch only thick, 3 feet 6 inches.
9. Broad short throwing stick, 2 feet 2 inches.

10. An ornament of feathers for the neck.
11. Five Kangaroo teeth in a bunch, worn round the neck.
12. A net waistband or belt, from Murray River, 8 feet long 6 inches wide.
13. Plume of feathers tied to thin wand, and stuck in the hair at dances—New South Wales.
14. War club.
15. War club.
16. Bag of close net work.
17. Band for forehead of Swan's down.
18. Root end of a kind of grass, used as pins for pegging out skins.
19. Sorcerer's stick.
20. Sorcerer's stick.

THE END
